PLATONISM

J. Burnet

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PLATONISM

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
1928

mw

Burnet, John, 1863–1928.

Platonism, by John Burnet ... Berkeley, Calif., University of California press, 1928.

3 p. l., 130 p. 23½ cm. (*Half-title:* Sather classical lectures, v. 5, 1928)

Cal. Un.

1. Plato. I. Title.

29—941

Library of Congress B393.B8
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SATHER CLASSICAL LECTURES

VOLUME FIVE

1928

PLATONISM

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PLATONISM

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

I have to speak to you of one who was in many ways the greatest man that ever lived, Plato of Athens. You will not expect, of course, that I should attempt to give anything like a complete account of his philosophy. That cannot be done yet. We are beginning to see, indeed, that Plato has been the source of all that is best and of most importance in our civilization, but the time has not yet come when it will be possible to show in detail how this is so, and it may be that it will never come completely. There are reasons for that which will appear more fully as we go on; for the present it will be enough to indicate where the problem lies. It will be seen that it is by no means one that admits of an easy solution.

In all accounts of Greek philosophy, three names stand out clearly, those of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. It is to them that later ages owe the enormous debt to Greece which they undoubtedly do owe, however little they may be aware of it. Even in the Middle Ages this was so. The *Timaeus* of Plato (or most of it) was preserved in a Latin version when the Greek language was practically forgotten in the West, and some of the logical treatises of Aristotle were known in the same way. For a comparatively short period at the end of the Middle Ages, the works of Aristotle became generally available in western Europe and had an enormous influence for a time. With the Renaissance, Plato once more became accessible, and the recovery of his writings was marked by the birth of modern science. All that is quite well known, and I need only indicate it here. But there still remains a serious problem which I propose to state as clearly as I can and, if possible, to find a solution for it, or at least to make clear where that lies. To put it briefly, the problem is, admitting that all modern science goes back ultimately to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, have we any means of distinguishing the contribution of each of these three men to it? It is not an easy question to answer. Socrates wrote nothing. It is a fact which we must always bear in mind that Athens at the greatest period of its history had no prose literature. That is why there are no "works of Socrates." Plato wrote a great deal, all of which is happily still preserved, but we must never forget that even Plato kept most of his real teaching for his school, and we have no right to suppose that we have it in any completeness in his written works. With Aristotle the case is different again. He wrote works for publication just as Plato had done; but he also wrote lectures to be delivered in his school. These remained unknown for some two centuries after his death, and when they were finally published, the result was that the works he had brought out in his lifetime disappeared, and have only been recovered in part by the laborious work of scholars during the nineteenth century. It will be seen that it is no easy task to decide what we owe to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, respectively, and I feel that there is some presumption in attempting it. Still, there are certain points which have been too much overlooked, and I think it will be well for us to reconsider them. The best way of doing this will be, I think, to start with Plato.

We know that Plato lived to be eighty years old (427–347 B.C.), and that all his published works still exist.[1] It is of course obvious that we cannot hope to understand him rightly unless we can discover some clue to the order in which these works were composed. As we have them, they are arranged in groups of four dialogues each, called "tetralogies," but the grouping of these is certainly not based on chronological considerations, so we have to try to find some means of arranging them which will give us a clue to the development of Plato's thought. We can see at once that he began as a dramatist rather than as a philosopher. In a large number of his works we can hardly fail to observe that his main object is to preserve the memory of the teaching of Socrates for a generation which had no direct knowledge of the man, and to do this without reference to the time at which he himself was writing. It is evident that he was deeply impressed by his great teacher, and that his chief endeavor was at first to make him live for those who had not known him. That was a new thing, and the dialogue form which he adopted for the purpose of making his master's memory live was a new thing too. It is very important to remember this. In later days it became common enough to write dialogues on philosophical themes which would hardly have been intelligible to the speakers into whose mouths they were put, and it is generally assumed that Plato's dialogues are to be interpreted in the same way as these. It may be so, but we certainly ought not to start with any such assumption. We must remember that Socrates wrote nothing himself, and that no Athenian wrote anything in prose at all till near the end of his life. It is at any rate the most natural thing to believe that the first writer of philosophical dialogues should at least endeavor to reproduce the manner of his master. We shall see later that there are excellent reasons for believing that he did; at present I only wish to point out that we are not entitled to assume that he did not.

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[1] There are certain dialogues marked as "spurious" (νόθοι) at the end of our MSS, and there are two or three which may be suspected besides. But there is no trace of any published work which has not survived.

In the first place, we must remember that Plato's works belong to the fourth century B.C., and that Socrates was put to death just at the beginning of that century (399 B.C.), when he was just over seventy and Plato was not yet thirty years old. Moreover, the last years of the life of Socrates had been a terrible time for Athens. The men who had made the fifth century B.C. so remarkable a period in Athenian history had nearly all passed away and, though we know enough of the age of Pericles to see that it was a time of intellectual ferment at Athens, we must never forget that Plato was not born till just after Pericles died, and that the closing years of the fifth century B.C. saw the downfall of the Athenian empire and the disappearance of nearly every one of the men who had for a time made it the artistic and intellectual center of the Greek world. We have to remember in particular that many of the men who had gathered round Socrates in the days before the outbreak of the

Peloponnesian War (431 B.C.) could no longer come to see him while the war lasted, though Plato makes a point of telling us in the *Phaedo* that a number of them came to Athens to be with him when the war was over and before he was put to death.[2]

It is fortunate that Plato was at this time a great dramatic genius and that it seemed to him at first to be the thing most worth doing to preserve the memory of his master, which would otherwise have perished. For we must remember that philosophy was not at all a native product of Athens. Socrates and Plato, indeed, were Athenian citizens, but there is no other Athenian name but theirs which is of the first importance in the history of philosophy. Before the time of Socrates it is only in the Ionic cities of Asia Minor and of Italy that we find the beginnings of science and philosophy,[3] and it was at Athens that the philosophies of eastern and western Ionia came together in the hands of Socrates. But, as I have said already, he himself had written nothing, and if Plato had not set himself to write Socratic dialogues, we should know practically nothing about him.

For we must always remember that we really know very little of the great age of Athens. Even Pericles is a mysterious figure to us, and his rivals and opponents are still more so. It is a fact that we have no contemporary record of the establishment of the Athenian empire. We know practically nothing of what Athenians were feeling and thinking during the age of Pericles. Still less do we know of the intellectual movement at Athens in the great age, which was the age of Socrates, and that is why he is so elusive a personality. In particular that is why he is commonly thought of as belonging to the end of the fifth century, in spite of the fact that he was born in or just before 470 B.C., that he was therefore contemporary with the introduction of Ionian philosophy to Athens and the controversies to which that naturally gave rise, and that all this took place more than twenty years before Plato was born. We shall never understand Socrates unless we constantly keep in mind that he belongs to the age of Pericles and that he was contemporary with the great days of his native city, with the Parthenon and the Elgin marbles. That is why, if Plato had not set himself to write Socratic dialogues, we should today know practically nothing about him. Fortunately, the death of Socrates marked a turning-point in the life of Plato. He had intended to devote himself to a political career, but it seemed to him that the execution of Socrates made that impossible, and he devoted himself instead to doing what he could to preserve his master's memory for the generations to come. There are two points which require special notice in this connection. The first is that Plato mentions his own name only thrice in all his works (if we except the *Epistles*). In the *Apology*,[4] Socrates offers to call the relatives of those who had been intimate with him to prove that they had not been "corrupted" by him, and among others, Plato's brother Adimantus. After the verdict of guilty, Plato is mentioned once more as offering along with others to become surety for a fine if the court will accept that penalty.[5] As the *Apology* must have been written soon after the condemnation of Socrates, we may fairly suppose that these were notorious facts that could not be passed over. Then, in the *Phaedo*, the absence of Plato on the last day of the life of Socrates is accounted for by the narrator with the simple words "Plato, I think, was unwell."[6] Moreover Plato does not seem to refer anywhere in his dialogues to anything that happened after the death of Socrates in 399 B.C.[7] It is plain that, so far as he was concerned, this was the end of Athenian history.

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[2] In *Phaedo* 59c Simmias, Cebes, and Phaedondas, the Pythagoreans from Thebes, and Euclides and Terpsion, the Eleatics from Megara, are specially mentioned as present when Socrates was put to death.

[3] The only possible exception is Empedocles of Agrigentum, who may have been a Dorian, since Agrigentum was a colony of Rhodes. There must, however, have been a considerable pre-Dorian population in Rhodes.

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[4] *Apol.* 34a, 1.

But Plato was not only a great dramatic genius; he became in time the head of a philosophical school, the Academy, which was ready to take up the task of completing the work, not only of Socrates, but also of the Pythagorean society in southern Italy, and of developing it still further. This meant, of course, that Socrates could no longer be the chief figure in the dialogues which Plato continued to write in the later years of his life. He had learned much in the West which went further than the teaching of his master and, as we shall see, he had become involved in practical politics to an extent which carried him far beyond Socrates. For these reasons, Socrates could no longer hold the chief place in Plato's later works, though he is still present in all but the last of them; and, in one of them, the *Philebus*, he appears once more as the principal speaker. On the whole, however, he takes a secondary place until, in Plato's latest work, the *Laws*, he disappears altogether. It is, I think, of great significance that Socrates still appears in dialogues which deal with things that must really have been strange to him, and still more so that he remains silent when these matters begin to be discussed. It means that Socrates had made so deep an impression on Plato in his youth that he could not leave him out, even in those dialogues which went far beyond anything that Socrates can ever have taught; and there are indications enough of the points in which Plato felt that he had left Socrates behind. It must surely mean something that, in these later dialogues, Socrates is quite silent on just those matters which are their leading contributions to philosophy. It means that they really go beyond the master's teaching, and the fact that Plato felt it right to make him say nothing about them is a guaranty of the genuinely Socratic character of the earlier dialogues. It is surely clear that, if he had been accustomed for years to make Socrates the mouthpiece of his own philosophical views, and if his readers had understood his writings in that sense, there would have been no reason why he should not have continued to write in the same way to the end. This applies in particular to the *Phaedo*, which certainly produces the impression of being in a special degree intended as a memorial to Socrates, and not as an exposition of Plato's own views.

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[5] *Apol.* 38b, 6.

[6] *Phaedo* 59b, 10. αλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἠσθένει. This is, of course, said by Phaedo, so it is absurd to say that Plato must have known quite well whether he was ill or not, as Zeller, for instance, does.

[7] I am, of course, aware that one or two such anachronisms are generally recognized. They are not important enough to be discussed here. I believe, in any case, that they are all due to misunderstanding.

We come now to what is evidently the most risky part of this discussion. Have we any means of distinguishing the dialogues which give us the teaching of Socrates more or less in its original form from those in which Plato is mainly concerned with his own contribution to philosophy? I believe we have, and I propose to indicate very briefly what it is. It is evident that our only chance of determining the chronology of Plato's writings lies in a close observation of their language. The first attempt to make use of this method was due to my predecessor at St. Andrews, Lewis Campbell, so long ago as 1867, in his edition of the *Sophistes* and *Politicus*.[8] In the Introduction he showed that, in a great number of linguistic phenomena, these two dialogues are distinct from the great mass of Plato's writings, while they agree with a much smaller number, namely, the *Laws*, the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*, and the *Philebus*. Now the *Laws* was admittedly Plato's last work, from which it seemed to follow that these dialogues formed the latest group among his writings. On similar grounds it soon appeared that a second group was formed by the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Theaetetus*, and the *Parmenides*, which seemed to belong to a transitional period, between the later dialogues and the earlier. All this had been clearly established by Campbell in 1867, but no notice whatever was taken of it for nearly thirty years.[9] In 1887 I became assistant to the Professor of Greek at St. Andrews and, at his request, I verified his results and saw at once that he was clearly right. And yet he had only done the most obvious thing. He had gone carefully through Ast's *Lexicon Platonicum* and noted the vocabulary of these dialogues. Ast is by no means an absolutely trustworthy guide, but he is sufficiently so for this purpose. It is important to observe that, when at last Platonic scholars in Germany began to pay attention to the linguistic evidence for the chronology of Plato's writings, they knew nothing of the results which Campbell had published in 1867. They certainly made use of his edition of the *Sophist* and *Politicus*, but (characteristically) they did not think it worth while to read his Introduction. In some ways it was just as well; for, when they did at last come to tackle the question of the chronology of Plato's dialogues by linguistic tests, they arrived at practically the same results on entirely different grounds. After one or two papers on particular points by Dittenberger[10] and Martin Schanz,[11] the whole question was taken up by Constantin Ritter, who increased the number of test-words very considerably.[12]

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[8] *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, with a revised text and English notes*, by the Rev. Lewis Campbell, M.A., Professor of Greek in the University of St. Andrews (Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1867).

[9] This was mainly due to the extreme modesty with which Campbell announced his discoveries. They are stated much more fully and clearly in Lutoslawski's book referred to on p. 11, n. 13. See the account he gives on pp. 82 seq.

Now none of these German writers showed any trace of acquaintance with the results that Campbell had published more than twenty years earlier. As I have said, Campbell had analyzed the vocabulary of the later dialogues, while Ritter confined himself mainly to adverbs and particles. It was sufficiently striking that these two methods should lead to precisely the same results. That is a remarkable fact, and I do not think it has been sufficiently appreciated even yet.

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[10] In his "Sprachliche Kriterien für die Chronologie der platonischen Dialoge," *Hermes*, XVI (1881), pp. 321–345, Dittenberger points out that τί μήν; is absent from about two-thirds of the genuine dialogues.

[11] In his "Zur Entwicklung des platonischen Stils," *Hermes*, XXI (1886), Schanz notes that ὄντως for τῷ ὄντι is found only in a fraction of the dialogues, while in some it has completely ousted the earlier τῷ ὄντι.

[12] C. Ritter, *Untersuchungen über Plato* (Stuttgart, 1888).

The next stage was due to an enthusiastic Pole, who was at that time living in exile in Spain, though today he is a professor at Wilno in his own country, Wincenty Lutoslawski. He had read Campbell's Introduction to the *Sophist* and *Politicus*, and he took the trouble to go round to the Platonic scholars in Germany and to ask them why they had paid no attention to Campbell's contribution to the subject. In 1897 his work appeared in English.[13] That was in itself a compliment to Campbell, to whom the book was dedicated, but unfortunately, he pushed the thing too far in attempting to found a science of "stylometry." It was easy to pick holes in that, but it is important to observe that Campbell himself was in no sense responsible for the exaggerations of Lutoslawski's work. A great deal of the criticism which has been aimed at Campbell is really directed against the excesses of Lutoslawski, and leaves Campbell's results just where they were.

Fortunately, after Campbell's death in 1908, Constantin Ritter was set free to take up the study of Plato on his own lines. His work was delayed by the war, but it is now complete.[14] It is much to his credit that, in spite of the bitterness which the war occasioned, he did full justice to the work of Lewis Campbell, of which, as I have said, he was ignorant when he published his first contribution to the subject. I feel entitled to take for granted in these lectures the results gained by Campbell and Ritter, and I do so the more confidently as they were attained quite independently and on entirely different grounds. If I feel obliged to go a little further than my predecessors, that is only natural in the circumstances; but I wish to make it quite plain at the outset that I begin where they left off.

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[13] W. Lutoslawski, *The Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic with an Account of Plato's Style and of the Chronology of his Writings* (London, 1897).

[14] Constantin Ritter, *Platon, sein Leben, seine Schriften, seine Lehre.* 2 vols. Vol. I, 1910; Vol. II, 1920.

We know a great deal less of Plato than we should like to know, and the reason is that, when he was about forty years old, he founded the Academy, and most of his teaching was given there. Now, here we must observe a point in which modern teaching differs from that of antiquity. We may generally assume with regard to a modern philosopher that what he chiefly cares about will be found in his published works, and that his teaching will be of secondary importance compared to them. In the case of a philosopher of the fourth century B.C. we have no right to make any such assumption. On the contrary, we may be pretty sure that his real teaching will be that given in the school, and that the works which he publishes after the foundation of his school will take a great deal for granted. This is the real reason why the style of Plato's later works is quite different from that of his earlier writings, which had for their chief end the reproduction of the conversations of Socrates, whereas now it is evident that the main purpose of Plato's dialogues is to be instructive. The dialogue form is still kept up indeed, but we feel more and more that it is a ghost, and there are long passages where it is altogether dropped. That makes it all the more significant that Plato felt it so difficult to leave Socrates out, even in dialogues where he really contributes nothing to the result. There can, I think, be no doubt that Plato's later writings are as far beneath his earlier on the purely artistic side as they are above them in the contribution they make to philosophy. But it is important to remember that Plato began as an artist rather than as a philosopher. After the death of Socrates, when Plato was nearly thirty years old, he wrote dialogue after dialogue, not so much to expound any views of his own as to picture as faithfully as he could the coversations of his master Socrates. These dialogues are still read, of course, and they always will be; for they are the most wonderful remains of what was an entirely new art at the time they were written and, though they have had many imitators, they have never been equaled and far less surpassed. But they do not give us Plato's own philosophy; for that we must look elsewhere.

Those earlier dialogues are dramatic in form, and, while some of them deal with the trial and death of Socrates, there are others which carry us back to the middle of the fifth century B.C., a time of which we should otherwise know very little indeed, the time before Plato was born and when Socrates was still a young man. Now, as I have said, Socrates lived the greater part of his life before Attic prose literature was invented. The generation of Pericles was certainly the great age of Athens, but we have no contemporary record of the time, which was the time in which Socrates lived. We can see, however, that Plato regarded the history of Athens as over, so far at least as he was concerned, before the close of the fifth century B.C., and that he set himself deliberately to preserve the memory of the great age of which he had seen the end. There must always, of course, be a certain doubt as to how far he was successful in doing so; but there cannot, I think, be any doubt at all that he was exceptionally well qualified for the task. He was, at this time, above all things an artist, and he had known Socrates ever since he could remember.[15] Moreover, he invented an entirely new literary form—the prose dialogue—for the purpose of preserving his memory, and he was able to use that literary form with supreme skill. It is very hard to see what he was aiming at if it was not to make his master live for the next generation, which would otherwise have known very little about him. We must, then, start with the Plato who invented a new literary form to preserve the memory of the man who was, in his opinion, the greatest he had known in his youth.

After Plato had founded the Academy, he wrote a certain number of dialogues, the purpose of which is quite different from that of the works of his youth. They deal with the problems which interested him at the time, and were, no doubt, intended mainly as a guide for his pupils. Therefore, though Socrates is present in all of them but the *Laws*, he is no longer the chief speaker in any of them except in the *Theaetetus* and the *Philebus*, in both of which the subject of discussion is one which lay within the range of Socrates himself. The fact appears to be that by this time Plato had a philosophy of his own which it would not have been appropriate to put into the mouth of his teacher. For this reason, in these later dialogues, the chief part is taken by such figures as the Eleatic Stranger, Timaeus of Locri, the elder Critias, and the Athenian Stranger of the *Laws*, though Socrates is still supposed to be present in all these dialogues except the last. No doubt Plato intended to remind us that he still felt he owed most to his master Socrates, but, for that very reason, shrank from attributing to him views which he had not actually held. It was a somewhat awkward device, no doubt, and to me it seems quite inexplicable unless we accept the view that in these earlier dialogues the personality of Socrates is really the leading theme, while in the later dialogues, to which he contributes nothing, he remains as a survival of the Socrates who had taken the leading part in the earlier. Nor can we wonder that he plays no part in Plato's last great work, the *Laws*. There are, in fact, two Platos, the youthful Plato who was a great dramatic genius and whose chief aim was to set before us a picture of Socrates as he was, and the older Plato, who seems to have lost the power of re-creating an age that was past and gone, but who was the head of a school, with a philosophy of his own to impart. In other words, the works which I assign to Plato's youth belong to the time before he founded the Academy; those of the Plato who was at the head of the Academy belong entirely to the later years of his life.

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[15] It need hardly be said that I reject entirely the view that Plato only made the acquaintance of Socrates at a later age. That is quite impossible in view of the relation of his nearest kinsmen to him.

It would seem, then, that our first task must be to distinguish, so far as we can, the Socratic writings of Plato from those written after the foundation of the Academy, but it will be well to consider first what such a distinction implies. Plato was an Athenian citizen, and he belonged to one of the leading families of the age of Pericles, though he himself was not born till shortly after Pericles died. In the next place, he was personally devoted to the only other Athenian who holds a place in the first rank of Greek philosophy. It is a fact, though it is apt to be forgotten, that, though the two greatest Greek philosophers, Socrates and Plato, were Athenian citizens, it is hardly possible to name any other philosopher, even of the second rank, who belonged to Athens. The philosophy of Socrates we know only at second hand, since he himself wrote nothing, and we have to reconstruct it, as best we can, from other sources. We know that he was put to death in 399 B.C., and that he was just over seventy years old at the time. He was therefore born about 470 B.C., some ten years after the victory of Salamis. His early manhood was spent accordingly in the full glory of the age of Pericles, and that wonderful time had come to an end before Plato was born in the earliest years of the Peloponnesian War. At the time of Plato's birth, Socrates would be over forty years old, and Plato cannot have remembered him as he was much before he was fifty-five. It follows that, when Plato first knew him, Socrates may already have been a very different man from Socrates as he was before Plato was born. There can be no doubt, however, that Plato's family must have remembered him as he was long before that, and there can be no doubt either that Plato must have learnt a great deal about Socrates from his uncle Charmides and from his elder brothers,[16] Glaucon and Adimantus, which would enable him, gifted as he was artistically, to draw a life-like picture of Socrates as he was some time before his own birth.

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[16] Adimantus was certainly much older than Plato. See my note on *Apol.* 34a, 1. It seems to follow that Glaucon was too, as they both won their spurs in the same battle at Megara.

Now, since the case stands thus, it is clear that we cannot hope to understand Plato at all unless we do our best to form some idea of what Socrates was. It is not easy for us to do this, in the absence of any prose literature of the Periclean age. But we must make the attempt; for Plato himself has made it abundantly clear that he regarded himself primarily as the successor of Socrates, and that he hardly thought of claiming a place for himself till a later period of his life. I shall therefore start with Socrates, who represents the great age of Athens, the fifth century B.C., before I try to bring before you the philosophy of Plato, strictly so called.

CHAPTER II

PLATO AND SOCRATES

Plato has certainly given us the materials for a pretty full biography of Socrates. These are generally ignored, and most accounts of him are based on Xenophon, or rather on a single work of Xenophon's, commonly called the *Memorabilia.* The importance which is still attached to this is really due to the mistaken view that Xenophon was older than Plato, a view which I do not think anyone holds now, though it still influences historians of philosophy. It is worth while to consider the origin of this mistake; for it has been often repeated, and has led to a great many errors. We must remember, in the first place, that there was no public register of the birth of Athenian citizens. No doubt they were entered on the lists of their "demes" or parishes when they became citizens, but that is not the same thing; for these local registers were not generally accessible when the study of chronology began at Alexandria. Greek chronology was really founded by Eratosthenes in the third century B.C., and his results were known mainly from the metrical version of them made by Apollodorus about the middle of the second century B.C. The method adopted was as follows: If the date of some striking event in the life of a writer is known, that is taken as his *ἀκμή* or, as the Roman chronologists had it, his *floruit*, and it was then assumed that he was just forty years old at the date when he "flourished." We are told, for instance, that Herodotus "flourished" in 444 B.C., which is the date of the foundation of the colony of Thurii in southern Italy, in which he took part, and from this it is inferred that he was born in 484 B.C., in the same year as some other distinguished men (e.g., Protagoras and Empedocles) who were also connected with Thurii. Now the chief event in the life of Xenophon that could be dated with certainty was the Anabasis, or expedition of Cyrus against his brother the king of Persia. That was a well-known story; for Xenophon's own narrative was, and still is, available. But it does not impress us with the historical insight of the Alexandrian chronologists that they should have supposed Xenophon to be forty years old at the time of the Anabasis. We know that he left Athens in 401 B.C., three years before the death of Socrates, and it is not very likely that he ever saw Athens again. From what he tells us himself, it is clear that he was not more than twenty-five at the time, and he may have been even less. He was, in fact, one of the young men whose early youth had been spent in the war, and who were left with nothing definite to do at the end of it. It was natural that he should feel drawn to Socrates in view of the exceptionally fine military record of the old man. Plato never mentions Xenophon at all, but he has preserved the memory of a conversation of Socrates with the Thessalian Meno, who also took part in the Anabasis. It is hardly to be supposed that Xenophon ever knew Socrates intimately. He has only one story to tell of their relations. Xenophon was eager to join the expedition of Cyrus, and he consulted Socrates on the subject. Socrates referred him to the Delphic oracle, and Xenophon tells us himself that he took his advice. He only asked the oracle, however, whether he should go on the journey he had in mind, to which question the oracle of course answered "Yes," and Socrates had to let him go. So Xenophon went off with Cyrus and, in spite of his youth, it was to him the leadership of the Ten Thousand was ultimately entrusted. The story of how he led them back is familiar and does not concern us here. We know that, in 396 B.C., he served under the Spartan king Agesilaus against the Persian satrap, Pharnabazus, but in 394 B.C. Agesilaus was recalled and Xenophon went back with him and fought against the Thebans *and the Athenians* at Coronea in Boeotia. That explains his banishment from Athens and the presentation to him of an estate at Scillus by the Spartans. There at last he found his true vocation. He led the life of a country gentleman, and devoted himself to hunting and literature. We must always bear in mind that Xenophon cannot have known Socrates at all intimately when he left Athens at the age of twenty-five or less, and that all he tells us about him is derived from literary sources no longer extant, and still more from his own invention. It is important to notice that Socrates remained the ideal of Xenophon as well as of Plato, but it is no less important to remember that Xenophon can never have known him in the same intimate way as Plato and, in particular, that he had left Athens two or three years before Socrates was put to death.

There is another witness who must be considered in any attempt to recover the portrait of Socrates, and that is Aeschines of Sphettos. He is one of those whom Plato represents as present at the death of Socrates,[1] and he gained the reputation in later days of having left a very faithful portrait of his master. It is now possible to form some idea of what he wrote, but it is not altogether easy. Among the fragmentary papyri recovered at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, Dr. Hunt found a long extract from a dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades,[2] and he consulted me as to its authorship. That was during the war, and I had not access at the time to the necessary books. However I ventured to suggest Aeschines to him, and my guess turned out right. There are, in fact, considerable extracts from a dialogue of his preserved in the rhetorician Aelius Aristides, and an inspection of these at once confirmed my conjecture. Of course, the complete remains of this dialogue were not to be found either in Aristides or in the papyrus, and it was no business of Dr. Hunt's to fit them in; but it is a thing that could easily be done, and I would suggest it as a profitable task to any young scholar who is on the lookout for something well worth doing. It would also be highly desirable, I think, to settle the question, if possible, of how far this dialogue of Aeschines was written under the influence of Plato, and in particular what light it throws on the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades. So much, at any rate, seems to be clear, that it was not a mere fancy of Plato's that they had at one time been very intimate, as has actually been recently maintained by a German scholar.[1] It would even be worth while to publish the remains of the dialogue in full. We cannot expect ordinary readers to skip at the proper places from the text of Aelius Aristides to that of the Oxyrhynchus papyri, and it is to be feared that, until the very considerable remains of this dialogue are edited in a continuous form, most people will remain in ignorance of the new light which it certainly throws on Socrates. It is clear, at any rate, that, so far as he goes, Aeschines strongly confirms the style of Plato's account of the Socratic conversations, which is not in the least like that of Xenophon.

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[1] *Phaedo* 59b, 8.

[2] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part XIII, No. 1608.

But there is a still earlier picture of Socrates than any of these. This is to be found in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, which we shall only understand if we remember that it was produced at a time when Plato was about five years old, in the year just after the battle of Delium (423 B.C.). It is of great value, provided we interpret it rightly; for it cannot be in any way influenced by Plato, who was a child when it was produced. It is also to be remembered that it is a comedy and is not, therefore, to be taken literally. On the other hand, there are certain things in the play that must have some historical foundation, unless we are to adopt the view that Aristophanes knew nothing at all about the man whom he had taken as the subject of his comedy. That seems to be quite impossible, especially as Plato has represented him as a guest in his *Symposium*, which is supposed to take place several years later. In this dialogue Aristophanes and Socrates are on perfectly good terms, and Alcibiades is represented as actually quoting the *Clouds*.[4] It will not do to say that Aristophanes really intended to attack the Sophists in this comedy; for they were none of them Athenians and they only paid flying visits to Athens, where they delivered courses, for which they charged high fees, chiefly for the benefit of the wealthy and aristocratic youth who were no friends to the democracy. It is certain that Aristophanes represents Socrates as at the head of a school, where astronomy and geography were taught, and which had a regular apparatus of maps and the like. We may be sure that none of the Sophists gave any instruction of that sort. Socrates is also represented as swinging aloft on some sort of machine in contemplation of the sun, while his disciples are peering into the earth to discover what is there. We may infer with certainty that, at the date of the *Clouds*, such things were already fairly familiar at Athens. Of course the picture Aristophanes gives is a burlesque and is not to be taken literally. But we are bound at the same time to assume that there really was such a thing as a school for the study of science at Athens in the middle of the fifth century B.C., and we shall see reason for believing that at one time Socrates was at the head of such an institution. Aristophanes calls the establishment presided over by Socrates the *Phrontisterion*, and there are traces[5] of the use of the un-Athenian application by him of the word φροντίς to scientific thought. We may fairly infer from the *Clouds* that Socrates had been at one time a student of natural science, and had taken an interest in the things that were "aloft" (τὰ μετέωρα) and in the things "beneath the earth" (τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς), and this is confirmed by Plato.[6] In fact, Aristophanes represents Socrates as an adherent of a system which is recognizable as that of Diogenes of Apollonia, who had revived the theory of Anaximenes that everything is condensed or rarefied "air," and that is why he is introduced as swinging aloft. It is only so that he can fill his soul with pure dry air. And that, too, explains why the chorus of the comedy consists of clouds. We are very apt to go wrong about this, especially those of us who live in northern Europe, where we think naturally of clouds as misty, foggy things, and we are apt to take them in that sense in Aristophanes. But that is certainly not what he is thinking of. He has rather in mind the white clouds of the Mediterranean region which are so easily regarded as condensed air.

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[1] A. Gercke, *in* Gercke-Norden, *Einleitung*, II. 366 *seq.*

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[4] *Symp.* 230a.

[5] *Symp.* 211b.

So far Socrates appears in the *Clouds* as the representative of Ionian science; but there is another side to him which is at least as important and seems at first to have no sort of connection with this. He is also represented as what we should call a spiritualistic "medium," and the inmates of the Phrontisterion are spoken of as "souls" (ψυχαί), a word which to the ordinary Athenian of that date would suggest only ghosts. There is no more striking fact about the language of the fifth century B.C. at Athens, so far as we know it, than the almost complete absence of the word ψυχή in any other sense than this, while in the next century it is quite common.[7] Now I will

[6] *Apol.* 30a.

[7] See "The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul," by John Burnet (*Proceedings of the British Academy*), 1915–1916, pp. 235 *seq.*

only remind you that Plato was a mere baby when the *Clouds* was produced, and you will see at once the importance of its evidence on this point.

We must next consider the evidence of Plato himself.[8] He appears to have been born in 428/7 B.C., about a year after the death of Pericles. His father, Ariston, was a man of distinction, as we learn from the first line of a poem addressed to his sons Glaucon and Adimantus, which is quoted in the *Republic* of Plato.[9] "Sons of Ariston," it runs, "godlike offspring of a glorious sire." We know nothing of Ariston except this, and he must have died when Plato was quite a child; for his wife Perictione afterwards married Pyrilampes, who had been active under Pericles. These two brothers must have been much older than Plato. The common idea that they were younger is due to a mere misunderstanding of the *Republic*, and yet, if we look closer, that dialogue contains the clearest proof that they were his elder brothers. The wealthy Syracusan, Cephalus, whom Pericles, in accordance with his policy, had induced to settle in the Piraeus, is still living, his eldest son Polemarchus is still young, and his younger son Lysias, though present, does not say a word in the dialogue, though we know from the *Phaedrus* that Plato was well acquainted with him when he returned to Athens at a later date and makes Socrates criticize his rhetoric with some sharpness. These things show that the conversation reported in the *Republic* is supposed to take place before the birth of Plato himself, and this is confirmed in the most striking way by a much later dialogue, the *Timaeus*. That dialogue is definitely dated the day after Socrates had reported the long conversation which makes up the *Republic*. It is surely inconceivable that Plato should have committed such a mistake about his own family as to represent his brothers as taking a leading part in a discussion which is plainly thought of as taking place before his own time, if they had really been younger than he was. The fact is that this notion is based solely on the unfortunate fact that most students of Plato know only the *Republic* well, and unconsciously substitute Plato for Socrates in that dialogue. They forget that Plato's dialogues are often supposed to take place at a date when he himself was too young to remember them, or even at a time before he was born. That is the penalty he has to pay for keeping himself out of them so completely as he has done. The time came when the very distinct chronological indications which he has scattered throughout his writings were not seen, and in consequence those dialogues were supposed to take place at a later date. We may at least take it that Plato was too much of an artist to indulge in a flagrant misrepresentation of the men of his own family, especially as we shall see that his family meant a great deal to him.

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[8] See "Plato's Biography of Socrates," by A. E. Taylor (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1917–1918, pp. 93 *seq.*).

[9] *Rep.* 368a, 4.

In this particular instance we have another proof that Adimantus at least was older than Plato, in fact so much older that he might be regarded as standing to him *in loco parentis*. In the *Apology*[10] Socrates is represented as saying that Adimantus, son of Ariston, should be called to give evidence as to whether Plato had got any harm from associating with him. Accordingly some writers have felt bound to concede that Adimantus at least was older than Plato, but they generally fail to observe that this means that Glaucon was older too, and they miss the point that the poem quoted in the *Republic* represents the two brothers as having won distinction in the same battle at Megara, so that they cannot have differed widely in age. It may be added that it would not have been in Plato's manner to make his brothers the chief speakers in the *Republic* if either of them had been still living at the time it was written. On the whole, we seem to be justified in concluding that Plato was much younger than Adimantus and Glaucon.

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[10] *Apol.* 34a, 1.

The family of Plato's mother, Perictione, was also highly distinguished and traced its descent to Dropides, the friend and kinsman of Solon. She herself was the cousin of Critias and the sister of Charmides son of Glaucon. It should be noted that we have here a further confirmation of the view that the Glaucon of the *Republic* was an older brother of Plato. In the best families it was the custom to call the two eldest sons after their grandfathers. There is another point as to which it is necessary to bear Athenian usages in mind. We are told in the *Charmides*[11] that Pyrilampes was the maternal uncle of Charmides. It follows that Perictione, the mother of Plato, was the niece of Pyrilampes and that he married her after the death of Ariston.

It will be noted that Plato's family belonged to what we may call the democratic party right down to the time of Pericles, and we shall see that this is a matter of the first importance for understanding him. It is also certain that he was proud of his illustrious kinsmen. He introduces them over and over again in his writings, though he only mentions his own name thrice, except, of course, in the *Epistles*, of which I shall have to say something later. The opening of the *Charmides*, in particular, is a glorification of the whole connection. It recalls the praises bestowed on the house of Dropides by Solon and Anacreon, the youthful beauty and modesty of Plato's uncle Charmides, and the fine figure of his stepfather Pyrilampes, who was accounted the tallest and handsomest man in Asia when he went on an embassy to the King.[12] Critias appears in the *Charmides*, and his grandfather, the elder Critias, in the *Timaeus* and in the unfinished dialogue called by his name. That this is not the younger Critias follows at once from what is said of him in the *Timaeus* itself. He is there represented as a very old man who can recall his boyhood clearly, though he can hardly remember what he was told yesterday.[13] He does remember, however, the days when the poems of Solon were still recent and were sung, as was natural, by the boys of democratic families.[14] It is one of the most extraordinary things that the Critias to whom we are introduced in this way should have been identified for so long with the Critias who was one of the Thirty. That is, of course, quite impossible, but it seems to have been quietly accepted by everyone who wrote about the *Timaeus*. I confess that I myself had never doubted it till I was correcting the proof of my *Greek Philosophy*, Part I, when I was able, almost at the last moment, to slip into a footnote[11] a statement of what ought to have been obvious long ago. I mention this to show how careful we have to be about such matters, and I shall no doubt have to refer to it again.

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[11] *Charmides* 158a.

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[12] *Charmides* 154–158. [13] *Tim.* 26b 4. [14] *Tim.* 21b 5.

Plato's reticence about himself stands in striking contrast to the way in which he celebrates the older members of his family, and all the more so, as some of the best known of them were by no means popular at the time he wrote, and we know enough about him to be sure that he must have felt deeply the disgrace which had fallen upon the younger Critias and Charmides and their sorry end. But, as I have said, he had resolved to shut his eyes to everything that happened after the Peloponnesian War, except the death of Socrates. His dialogues are not only a memorial to Socrates, but also to the happier days of his own family, most of whom had passed away before he began to write. It is not easy for us to remember that he knew of the end of his own kinsmen at the time he wrote the *Charmides*. Yet the fact is certain, and it is just what we must bear in mind if we are to understand Plato at all. Undoubtedly he regarded the history of Athens as finished by the Peloponnesian War, and nothing later than that, except the trial and death of Socrates, is even mentioned. By the time he wrote the *Charmides* we should expect to find that his heart was sore both for what he saw clearly was the downfall of his beloved Athens and for the miserable end that had come to some of his own people. But his artistic gift is seen here most clearly. Not only could he keep himself out of his dialogues altogether, but he was able to ignore completely the pitiful end that had come to some of his nearest and dearest and to throw himself back into the time when they had still the promise of the future before them. That, I take it, is none too common a gift.

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[11] *Greek Philosophy*, Part I, p. 338.

But to return to Socrates. It seems certain that he must have had an enormous influence even before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431 B.C., when he was about forty years old. We can infer this from the list which Plato gives us in the *Phaedo*[16] of those who were present at his death, and which it is quite impossible to regard as a fiction of his own. That seems to follow from the fact that Antisthenes is included in the list. Without giving too much credit to the anecdotes about the relations between Plato and Antisthenes which are found in later writers, we are struck by the fact that this is the only place where Plato has thought him worthy of mention. I cannot doubt, then, that the list of those present is intended to be complete. The most remarkable thing about it is that it contains the names of several Pythagoreans. We have first of all the young Thebans, Simmias and Cebes, who had been disciples of the Pythagorean Philolaus, who had taken refuge at Thebes after the expulsion of the Pythagoreans from Italy about the middle of the fifth century B.C. There is no doubt, however, that he was able to return to Italy towards the end of the century, and again it is very remarkable that two of his Theban disciples should have come to Athens and attached themselves to Socrates. There was another Theban with them, called Phaedondas, of whom we cannot be said to know anything very definite. It looks, however, as if Philolaus had recommended his disciples to Socrates when he left Thebes. Of course we cannot affirm that positively, but it seems the most natural explanation of the conspicuous part they play in the *Phaedo*. There were also present Euclides and Terpsion, who were Eleatics from Megara. The Eleatics were a dissident sect of Pythagoreans, and it is at least a striking fact that they, too, looked up to Socrates as their master. If we note further that the last conversation of Socrates is supposed to be narrated by Phaedo of Elis, who is the guest of the Pythagoreans at Phlius—Echecrates and the rest—we shall be forced to conclude that, even before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, and therefore before the birth of Plato, Socrates was already a revered figure in the Pythagorean societies scattered over the Greek world. It is true, no doubt, that the war was not quite continuous and that it would have been just possible for Pythagoreans or Eleatics to visit Athens during the peace of Nicias; but, so far as we can see, there was no period after 431 B.C. when peace was sufficiently secured to allow of prolonged visits to Athens by the exiled Pythagoreans who were mainly at home in places where Spartan influence was predominant.

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[16] *Phaedo* 59b 6 *seq.*

By Plato's time we know that the Pythagoreans had been able to return to southern Italy and had concentrated themselves at Taras (Tarentum) under Archytas. Philolaus was one of them, and we now have an account of the medical views which he worked out in these later days.[17] I cannot doubt that Socrates was profoundly influenced by this last generation of the Pythagorean school, and we shall see further ground for believing this as we go on.

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[17] *Meno Anon. Londin*, Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, i. A. 27.

Now it seems clear that the time when Socrates came under the influence of the exiled Pythagoreans must have been before the Peloponnesian War broke out, and therefore before Plato was born. As we shall see, Socrates must have come under the influence of Italian philosophy when he was still very young. During the war he was sufficiently occupied otherwise, and it was only at the end of it that he found it possible to go back to the studies of his youth. That alone is enough to make us feel how very inadequate is our knowledge of Athens at its greatest time, the age of Pericles. In the century after the death of Socrates, Athens certainly became the chief home of philosophical study. This, however, was due, in the first place, to the fact that it was the seat of the Academy, where Plato had founded his school, in which, however, the leading men were more and more foreigners, like Aristotle and Xenocrates; and secondly, to the fact that, when at last Athens fell under Macedonian control, it became more and more common for young Ionians to make Athens their intellectual center. It was still the most convenient place for the Ionians of Asia Minor, among whom philosophy had made its first appearance.

But we must never forget that, though Athens had been the center of Greek philosophy in the age of Pericles, that was due almost entirely to the imperial position it had attained at the time. Even though it produced these two great men, Socrates and Plato, philosophy was not a thing in which the Athenian people took any interest. It was only in the middle of the fifth century B.C., in the generation before Plato was born, that Athens became for a time the central spot in which the philosophies of the Ionians of the east and those of the Ionian west, in south Italy and Sicily, came into contact. The important thing to realize is that it was in the young Socrates that these two influences met, and that Plato set himself at first to give a vivid picture of how Socrates was affected by them in his early youth. There are two things in particular that we may gather from him in this connection. In the first place, it appears clearly from the *Phaedo* that Socrates had never come into personal contact with Anaxagoras. That means that the date commonly given for Anaxagoras is wrong. He must have been a good deal earlier,[18] and it may well be that he had come to Athens, very likely in the service of Persia, at the time of Salamis (480 B.C.) before Socrates was born. In the second place, it is important to remember that, whereas Plato takes it for granted that Anaxagoras had left Athens before Socrates was old enough to know him personally, he represents his master as conversing with the Eleatic Parmenides and Zeno in his early youth, long before Plato himself was born. Moreover, the subject of this conversation is the so-called "theory of ideas," very much as that theory is expounded in the *Phaedo*, and the young Socrates is represented as unable to answer the criticisms of this theory, which are put into the mouth of the Eleatic visitor. It seems to me that we are bound, in view of this, to believe that the "theory of ideas" was really taught by Socrates, and that he had learnt it at an early age from the Pythagoreans. Further, I cannot doubt that the *Parmenides*, which is certainly later in date than the *Republic*, is only to be understood as the renunciation of that theory, at least in its original form, by Plato. This is, of course, of the first importance, if it is true, and it is at least certain that Plato never even alludes to the theory again in his published works with the exception of a single brief mention of it put into the mouth of the Pythagorean *Timaeus*.[19] What this means we shall have to consider later.

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[18] See A. E. Taylor in the *Classical Quarterly*, XI, 81 *seq.*

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[19] Plato *Tim.* 51c *seq.*

CHAPTER III

THE THEORY OF IDEAS

I now propose to discuss what is commonly known as "Plato's Theory of Ideas," but there are certain points which must be cleared up first. From what I have already said, it will be clear that the statement commonly made, that Plato only became acquainted with Socrates when he was twenty years old, is quite incredible. The younger brother of Adimantus and Glaucon and the nephew of Charmides must certainly have known Socrates ever since he could remember. We must bear in mind that in Greece boys developed early, and were, in fact, what we call precocious. And there is another conclusion which follows at once from the account I have given of Plato's family and his pride in it. It has become almost a commonplace to say that Plato's birth and connections would incline him from the first to the oligarchic and reactionary side in politics, but nothing can be less true. Of course he was not a democrat in the sense that word acquired during the war, but the tradition of his family was quite distinctly democratic, as is shown by the stress laid on its connection with Solon. Plato's stepfather Pyrilampes was a follower and friend of Pericles and an adherent of the democratic party, otherwise he would hardly have chosen the name of Demos for his son. It appears also from the

Republic that Adimantus and Glaucon were intimate with Cephalus, the wealthy Sicilian whom Pericles had induced to settle in the Piraeus. They were friends of his son Polemarchus, the elder brother of the orator Lysias, who is said to have been present at the conversation narrated in the *Republic*, but who does not say a single word in the course of it. He was evidently too young to take part in the argument. All that points to the conclusion that the conversation recorded in the First Book of the *Republic* is supposed to take place at an earlier date than is commonly supposed. A conversation in which the aged Cephalus takes part along with Plato's elder brothers and the rhetorician Thrasymachus, who was satirized by Aristophanes at a date when Plato was a baby, is dated as plainly as possible before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, and if we remember that, the general outlook of the dialogue becomes much more clear to us.

There can be no doubt that the age of Pericles was the greatest time in the history of Athens, and yet, as I have said, it is a time we know comparatively little about. The Athenians had not yet begun to write in prose. It was the age of the drama, which seldom gives us any clear indication of contemporary events, and in any case we have to remember that we only have seven complete plays of Aeschylus, seven of Sophocles, and nineteen of Euripides, some of which have survived by accident. The painting and music of the great age of Athens have disappeared altogether, and we can hardly form an idea of what they were like. What is preserved is the architecture and sculpture, or at any rate specimens of them, but even here we can hardly get a clear notion of what these remains mean. We know that they were decorated with painting and gilding, and that our ideas of them are therefore quite wrong. Moreover, we have to face the further difficulty that there is hardly a word in literature about the artistic glories of the age of Pericles. It seems as if they were taken very much for granted, as is quite usual with the artistic products of the greatest ages. The only poet who was more or less contemporary with Plato is Aristophanes, but his best time was over before Plato's had begun. On the other hand, we hear a great deal about music in the literature of the next century, which it is impossible to say that we can fully understand. We only know that the Greek music of the classical age was not very developed from our point of view, and that, though its rhythm was very complicated, and its melody, though very different from ours, was probably quite advanced, it was entirely lacking in what we call harmony.

The year 399 B.C., in which Socrates was put to death, marks the end of a period, and it was not for a good many years later that anything we can call a new period begins. It is hardly too much to say that, but for Plato, we should know practically nothing of the intellectual history of Athens in the fifty years between the Persian and the Peloponnesian Wars. Plato, as we have seen, was not born till after the death of Pericles, but it is impossible to doubt that he knew the generation preceding his own with singular intimacy, and in particular that he had known Socrates ever since he could remember, and that the personality of that remarkable man had made a very deep impression upon him in his early boyhood. If he himself did not take part in Athenian politics in later life that seems natural enough when we remember the low ebb to which the public life of Athens had sunk in the fourth century B.C.

But, in the age of Pericles, things were very different. We have, of course, very little contemporary evidence on the subject. Had it not been for Plato's love and veneration for Socrates, and for his extraordinary dramatic gift, we should not have been able to picture the great age of Athens for ourselves at all, and, as a matter of fact, no modern historian has really succeeded in making us feel at home in that period. It was one, we can see, of intellectual ferment at Athens, a ferment which was due mainly to the clash of eastern and western philosophical views of which it was the scene since Anaxagoras and Parmenides had come there. Of all this we should have known nothing but for Plato. In the *Phaedo*[1] he has put into the mouth of Socrates a perfectly intelligible account of his intellectual development which most modern critics have strangely regarded as an account of Plato's own. That it certainly is not; for it can be shown that the theories there discussed were one and all known in the middle of the fifth century, and the way in which they come into conflict with one another gives us a living picture of the intellectual ferment of that time, when Ionian ideas from the east came into sharp conflict with Ionian ideas from the west. In particular, it is very significant that Plato represents Socrates as never having come into personal contact with Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, the friend of Pericles, but only as having read his book and been disappointed by it.[2] That means that Anaxagoras must have been known at Athens much earlier than is commonly supposed. On the other hand, there is not the slightest reason to doubt that Parmenides and Zeno came from Elea to Athens at a time when Socrates was old enough to meet them, as Plato said they did.[3]

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[1] *Phaedo* 96a, 6 *seq.*, with the notes in my edition.

It has been necessary to say something about Socrates, though the subject of these lectures is properly Plato. The reason is that it must be made clear that the Socratic dialogues of Plato really and truly deal with Socrates and that they are a marvellously accurate and truthful representation of him. If we regard them as giving us the philosophy of Plato himself, we shall never understand him rightly. We must learn, in short, to draw as clear a line as possible between those works of Plato which may be called dramatic, and which have as their chief object to bring before us the image of Socrates in his daily life and conversation, and the works of the time when Plato was at the head of the Academy. We must keep constantly in mind that Socrates had written nothing, and that indeed no Athenian of the age of Pericles had published any work in prose, so that, but for the Socratic dialogues of Plato, we should know very little about Socrates indeed. The Academy was founded when Plato was about forty years old, but he was already by that time the author of a large number of dialogues in which he had tried to

[2] *Phaedo* 97b 8 *seq.*

[3] Of course this means that the date commonly given for Parmenides is too early. Plato himself gives a later date, which is evidently right. See my *Early Greek Philosophy*, sec. 84.

make Socrates live for a generation which had not known him, since most of his contemporaries were dead. To do this Plato invented a new literary form, the prose dialogue. It is pretty certain that he was the first to write works of this kind, which have often been imitated, but on the whole with indifferent success. The philosophical dialogue was a new thing in literature and it called for an exceptional genius, who had the gifts which might have made him either a tragedian or a comedian. It also called for the powers of a historian; for it was intended to bring before the reader the days of Plato's youth and even earlier. Plato must, one would think, have been sad enough at the time these dialogues were composed, but he had sufficient dramatic genius to throw himself into the century which had ended with the death of Socrates, and even into the years that had preceded his own birth, without a slip. No one could ever guess from the *Charmides* what a sorry end had come to that promising youth, and yet it must have been very present to Plato's mind at the time he wrote the dialogue. I do not think it can be doubted that the *Republic* was completed before the foundation of the Academy, though I am quite willing to admit that some portions of it were intended as a prospectus for certain courses which Plato intended to deliver later. We shall see, however, that, when the time came for him to found a school of his own, he had changed in many ways, and that the course scheduled out in the *Republic* was seriously modified.

Now one of these changes was certainly Plato's attitude to what is called "the theory of ideas," or less correctly "the ideal theory," and it is of the first importance that we should get a clear view of what that means. In the first place it must be noted that the word "idea" has entirely changed its meaning since Plato's days and, as it is quite at home in modern philosophy, it will be better to avoid it altogether in speaking of Plato. There can be no doubt that, in Plato, the word means primarily "form" or "figure," and it will save a very great deal of confusion if we drop the word "idea" altogether in discussing this doctrine. I may just give a hint of how the word has come to mean something so different in modern times from its meaning in antiquity. It began with the Neoplatonists, as we call them, to whom an "idea" meant primarily a thought of God, and in modern philosophy it has come to be used of a thought of anyone and to be contrasted with the more vivid term "impression." But originally the word meant shape or form (εἶδος, ἰδέα) and not a mental state at all, and therefore it will be better, as I have said, to avoid it altogether in discussing Plato, and all the more so as we shall see that, in his more mature writings, he is careful never to use it himself in the technical sense it bears when he is writing of Socrates.

There are two things which are quite certain about the "forms" in the sense in which they are sometimes spoken of in the earlier works of Plato. In the first place, the forms are more real than anything else, and, in the second place, they are not "things" in space and time. To take a simple example, the geometer makes a number of statements about "the triangle" as, for instance, that its interior angles are equal to two right angles, and we know that his statements are true. But of what is he speaking? Certainly not of any triangle that we can perceive by the senses (for all these are only approximately triangles), nor even of any we can imagine. He is speaking of what is "just a triangle" (*αὐτὸ τρίγωνον*) and nothing more. It is neither equilateral, isosceles, or scalene. And so it is with all other geometrical terms. It is clear from the way in which the subject is introduced in the *Phaedo*[4] that this was the original sense of the doctrine of "forms."

We soon find, however, that, even in the *Phaedo*, there is another application of the word "idea." It is asserted there that not only are there "forms" in this sense of geometrical figures, but also of such things as "the beautiful" and "the just." We have never met with anything that is simply beautiful or absolutely just, but we know nevertheless what these terms mean, and they must therefore be the names of something absolutely real, though they can never be perceived by the senses. We see then that, in the *Phaedo*, there are two classes of "forms," firstly, the mathematical, and secondly, the moral and aesthetic, and that these are far more real than the imperfect approximations to them which occur in our everyday experience. This, as a matter of fact, is all that there is to be said about the theory of "forms" at this stage. It opens up an entirely new view of reality.

For the present, it will be best not to go into further detail about this theory. I trust that what I have said is plain. It seems evident that the doctrine arose in connection with the study of mathematics, which had already reached the stage of making confident assertions about things which are never perceived by the senses, and that it was extended so as to cover certain objects of moral and aesthetic importance which seemed to have a similar character to the mathematical "forms," in so far as we know what they mean, though we have never met with a perfect example of any of them.

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[4] *Phaedo* 65d, 4.

I have, of course, stated this doctrine as simply as I can, because it is only by doing so that we can gain an insight into its real meaning and origin. No doubt it has other implications, which are best left aside for the present; but it at least means that the object of anything that can be called science in the strict sense of the word is something which may be *indicated* by the world of sense, but is not really of that world, but of a higher degree of reality.

Now the theory of "forms," as I have attempted to sketch it, is generally called the Platonic "theory of ideas," and I wish, first of all, to consider how far it is rightly attributed to Plato. If we ask this question, we are at once faced with some very serious difficulties. In the first place, we must observe that, though it is found, for instance, in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, to say nothing for the present of the *Phaedrus*, the case is quite different when we come to the dialogues which we have seen reason to refer to the period after that, the period of the Academy. This begins with the *Parmenides*, in which that great man is arguing against the theory which Socrates has worked out. That is represented, of course, as happening a good twenty years before Plato was born. Parmenides begins his criticism of the theory by calling attention to the fact that it does not explain everything. It will work in mathematics and even in morals and aesthetics, but it seems that it will not go any further. The young Socrates confesses that he doubts whether there are "forms" of Man, Fire, and Water, and he admits that the theory will not do anything to explain Hair, Mud, and Dirt. Parmenides says that is because he is still young, and he goes on to raise certain other difficulties which Socrates cannot solve satisfactorily. Now those who believe that the "theory of ideas" was invented by Plato, and that at a fairly advanced period of his life, have to explain how it is that he wrote a work in which he represents Socrates as holding that theory years before he himself was born, and failing completely to defend it competently against the criticism of Parmenides. To me that is quite incredible, and all the more so as there is not another word about the "forms" in any dialogue of later date than the *Parmenides* except in a single sentence of the *Timaeus*. But we have seen that the *Timaeus* is supposed to represent a conversation which takes place the day after the *Republic*, and therefore before the Peloponnesian War. Timaeus himself is a Pythagorean, of whom we know nothing from any other source than the dialogue itself, and he is represented as giving in one place, and one place only, a brief reference to the theory of "forms." Further, in the *Sophist*, which is generally regarded as earlier in date than the *Timaeus*, we find a remarkable passage in which "the friends of the forms" are spoken of in a way which has given much trouble to modern interpreters.[5] The people so described maintain, we are told, that reality consists of certain "intelligible and incorporeal forms," while every thing corporeal is only a stream of becoming. This passage constitutes a real difficulty for those who believe that the doctrine of "forms" started with Plato, and was maintained by him in its original sense till the end. In the *Sophist* the advocates of the theory do not even attempt to justify their belief, and in fact they refuse to say anything at all. Is it possible to believe that Plato, in what is evidently one of his most careful dialogues, should treat a theory of his own in this way? I venture to say that it is not, and I think I can show that he did not, and that, but for certain statements of Aristotle, it would never have been supposed that he did. Let us consider for a moment what the evidence is. We have seen that, on quite external grounds, that is, on grounds which are altogether independent of any theory about Plato's philosophy, certain dialogues can be marked off clearly as belonging to his later life, when he was at the head of the Academy, and that, in all those dialogues, there is only one passage which can be understood as affirming the theory of "forms" at all. That is the passage of the *Timaeus*, where it is put into the mouth of a Pythagorean at a date clearly marked as before the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. We know further that the doctrine of "forms" was not held by Plato's immediate successors at the head of the Academy, Speusippus and Xenocrates, who must have known at least whether Plato had taught it or not. We find also that, in the fifth century A.D., when the Academy had come under the leadership of the so-called Neoplatonists, some of them at least were able to distinguish the theory of "forms" from the teaching of Plato himself. We must remember that, when they got control of the Academy, they had, of course, access to its library, and were therefore able to speak positively about matters which are obscure to us. Now, in his commentary on the *Parmenides*,[6] Proclus says this:

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[5] *Soph.* 248a, 4. *Πρὸς δὴ τοὺς ἑτέρους ἴωμεν, τοὺς τῶν εἰδῶν φίλους.* This whole passage requires most careful study. It was certainly written long after the *Parmenides* (see above, p. 9), but it still dwells on the inadequacy of the theory of "forms."

> The theory of forms is also to be found among the Pythagoreans. Plato himself makes this clear in the *Sophist* by calling the wise men in Italy "friends of the forms," but he that gave them the highest place and most explicitly assumed the forms is Socrates.

It appears to me that this statement is of the highest value, and it will be seen that it harmonizes perfectly with the view I have tried to set before you with regard to early dialogues like the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. In the main, these are, I believe, careful reproductions of the teaching of Socrates on the subjects with which they deal, and we are not entitled to suppose that they give us any hint of what Plato himself was to teach in the Academy. What that was, we shall try to see later, but it is at least certain that we shall see it far more clearly if we leave the theory of "forms" out of account. At the beginning of the *Parmenides*, Plato has given us sufficient grounds for rejecting it, and his criticisms are not effectively answered in that dialogue by the young Socrates. It will be observed, however, that these criticisms are based on the view that the doctrine does not go far enough. It is practically confined to mathematics (whence the name "form"), which seems to be the original Pythagorean application of the theory, and to ethics and aesthetics, which appear to be the Socratic development of it. Parmenides insists that, when Socrates is older, he will not confine it any more to these fields, but will take in also the elements of the material world and even such things as hair, mud, and dirt. That is an important hint, and we shall have to keep it in mind when we try to understand Plato's own philosophical views. We must never forget the opening of the *Parmenides* if we wish to understand Plato rightly. Still more must we bear in mind the later discussion of the same subject in the *Sophist.*

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[6] p. 149 (Cousin).

If it is asked whether Plato ever held the doctrine which I have tried to show was a Socratic development of Pythagoreanism, I should answer that we have really no means of knowing. His earlier works were written mainly as an artist, full of enthusiasm for his subject, to whom it was of the first importance to present a picture of Socrates as he was, to generations that had not known him. But, when the time came, he felt obliged to turn from the doctrine as Socrates had taught it and, for that reason, he wrote the *Parmenides.* That he still kept Socrates as an honored figure in his dialogues, though no longer as the chief speaker, except in the *Theaetetus* and *Philebus*, can only be due to his feeling that he in truth owed everything to his master. Perhaps that is not very creditable to him as an artist, and we feel that his artistic gift was passing away as his philosophical gift developed, but it is surely creditable to him as a man.

CHAPTER IV

THE ACADEMY AND ARISTOTLE

I have tried to show that what are known as the "Socratic dialogues" of Plato were written in the years just after the death of Socrates—I cannot believe that any of them were written before that—and that his chief purpose in them was to give as complete and faithful a picture as he could of his master's personality and teaching. It is above all remarkable how he was able to throw himself back into the days before the Peloponnesian War became really serious for Athens without any anachronism worth talking about. No one could guess from the opening of the *Charmides*, for instance, what was to be the fate of Critias and Charmides; yet it must have been very present to Plato's mind at the time the dialogue was composed, and they were near kinsmen of his own. It is a remarkable thing that he was able to reproduce the atmosphere of his own youth so faithfully and without even a hint of the terrible time that Athens had gone through before he wrote. That, in fact, is the first thing we are bound to remark about him. He wrote the Socratic dialogues roughly between 399 B.C., when Socrates was put to death, and 380 B.C., about which time Plato founded the Academy. That was the time of Spartan supremacy in Greece, and also the time of Athenian insignificance.

And yet the writings of Plato which belong to this period ignore it completely and take us back to an earlier age without a hint of what was to come. That is a thing which no one had ever done before, and it shows that Plato was above all things an artist at the time. He was born just after Pericles died, and yet, in many of his dialogues, he was able to take the reader back to the Periclean age without allowing a shadow to be cast on his work by the events of the time at which they were written. He was born just soon enough to be able to do this, and he preferred to go back to the period before his own birth rather than to say anything about the events of the time at which he was writing. As I have said already, he mentions his own name only thrice in all his works if we exclude the *Epistles*, and that is one of the most remarkable facts about him.[1]

We do not know the precise date at which the Academy was founded, but we cannot doubt that Plato was at least forty years old at the time, and that it was after his first visit to Italy, where he had come under the influence of Archytas, the great mathematician and ruler of Tarentum. He tells us nothing about this himself, and yet it was the most important event in his life. The Academy, so-called after the local hero Academus, was situated less than a mile outside the Dipylon gate, off the road which ran north-west through the outer Ceramicus among the olive-groves below Colonus. It was a gymnasium that had existed since the days of Pisistratus, but it was Cimon who laid it out as a public park with shady avenues of plane-trees.[2] Here was the precinct of Athena with the twelve sacred olive-trees (*μόρια*) and the ancient pedestal (*ἀρχαία βάσις*) with representations of Heracles and Prometheus, which formed the starting-point of the Lampadephoria, or sacred torch-race, described in the First Book of the *Republic*.[3] It was here that Plato founded his school, the idea being no doubt suggested to him by the revived Pythagorean society at Tarentum and by the school of his friend Euclides at Megara. Plato's school was dedicated to the Muses, and we hear of monthly common meals in honor of "the divinity" (*τὸ θεῖον*). At this date, that was the only form a corporation could take, and especially a corporation which, like the Academy, was open to others than Athenian citizens. The original property of the society was the house and garden in which Plato and his successors lived, though, at a later date, the school was removed into the city. The Academy was from the very first a great institution and it attracted students from far and wide. It had a long history; for it lasted till 529 A.D., when it was closed, along with the other philosophical schools, by the Emperor Justinian. No modern university has yet existed for so long.

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[1] pp. 6-7.

[2] Plutarch, *Cimon* 13.

It was, of course, natural that, even after the Academy was opened, Plato should at first write dialogues in which the dramatic form was still kept up, and in which the personality of Socrates was still prominent. That, I take it, is the explanation of the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*, which give us at once what are perhaps the most living pictures of Socrates we have, the former in his early youth and the latter just before his death, along with certain discussions which without, as I believe, going seriously beyond what may fairly be attributed to Socrates himself, nevertheless suggest a rather more systematic treatment of the theory of knowledge than the earlier dialogues do. But, what is more striking still is the fact that the *Parmenides* opens with a refutation of the theory of forms as that is presented to us in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, while there is not even an allusion to the theory in the *Theaetetus*. I have said already that, though Plato may have continued to teach some such doctrine in the Academy, it was assuming an entirely new form in his teaching there, which it would have been wholly inappropriate to put into the mouth of Socrates. As I have said, there is only one place in all the works of Plato, after the *Parmenides*, where the theory of forms is even mentioned. That is in the *Timaeus*,[4] which is supposed to be a conversation taking place the day after the *Republic*, and it is there put into the mouth, not of Socrates, but of the Pythagorean Timaeus, and is apparently confined to the sphere which we have some reason to believe it was confined to in their hands.[5]

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[3] *Rep.* I, 328a.

I have assumed that the *Theaetetus* is later than the *Parmenides*, though I do not wish to insist upon that. It seems natural, of course, that Plato should give us first of all a picture of Socrates in his early years and follow it up by one dated clearly just before his trial, when he was seventy years old. But there is another reason still. The *Parmenides* is a narrated dialogue, and a very complicated narrative it is. The *Theaetetus* is remarkable as a reversion to Plato's earlier style of composition, which we may call the "dramatic dialogue," and to this form he remained faithful for the remainder of his life.[6] It even seems possible to see why. Plato had begun by writing in the simple dramatic form; but, as time went on, that seemed bare and inadequate, and he felt that only the narrated dialogue could do justice to what he had to say. As the dialogues were only to be read and not performed on the stage, it seemed desirable to supplement them with descriptive passages which would give more room for his artistic power, and there is little doubt that this is what has made the dialogues of his central period so attractive to modern readers.[7] And yet, even in the *Republic*, there are long passages in which we feel that it is an effort to keep this up, while in the *Parmenides* it becomes really troublesome. That dialogue is supposed to be narrated at third-hand, as it almost must be since it is thought of as taking place when Socrates was only about twenty years old, and as being narrated after his death. It is easy to see that this would involve a serious complication which is not very successfully dealt with. We cannot, therefore, feel surprised, that in the *Theaetetus* this form is given up, and that Euclides is made to justify the change of form in the following words—

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[4] *Tim.* 51c *seq.*

[5] Cf. p. 44. I would suggest further that it is a very striking fact that the summary of the *Republic* which is prefixed to the *Timaeus* stops short at the point where the doctrine of forms is introduced, and that the introduction of Timaeus himself, who is an entirely new speaker, and is not supposed to have heard what Socrates says in the *Republic*, has a similar purpose. It serves to mark the theory of forms, as he propounds it, as something essentially Pythagorean rather than Socratic.

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[6] The distinction between "dramatic" and "narrated" dialogue is of fundamental importance in Plato, though it must be confessed that the accepted terminology is apt to lead to confusion. A "dramatic" dialogue means a dialogue which consists (like a play) simply of speeches by the interlocutors without any other matter; a "narrated" dialogue is one which is reported throughout and admits of comment and description by the narrator. Some modern playwrights (for instance Mr. Shaw) have tried to solve the difficulty by very elaborate stage directions, with the result that their plays are intelligible only to those who have a "book of the words."

[7] For this reason I entirely agree with Taylor (*Plato*, p. 235) in holding that the most artistic of all Plato's dialogues, the *Protagoras*, is later in date than the *Gorgias*.

> Now this is the way I wrote the conversation: I did not represent Socrates relating it to me, as he did, but conversing with those with whom he told me he conversed. . . . Now in order that the explanatory words between the speeches might not be annoying in the written account, such as "and I said" or "and I remarked," whenever Socrates spoke, or "he agreed" or "he did not agree," in the case of the interlocutor, I omitted all that sort of thing and represented Socrates himself as talking with them.[8]

It is surely clear that this passage is intended to mark a change in Plato's style of writing, but there is still more in it than that. Plato was now engaged in the direction of philosophical research, and the artistic method of the dialogues of the central period of his life had ceased to be important. We can see, I think, that with the *Theaetetus* something quite new is beginning. Plato is now at the head of a philosophical school, and such dialogues as he writes are intended mainly for it. It is rare for any man to write dramatically and artistically works which are intended for the instruction of a body of pupils and, as I have said, though Socrates is still retained in all the dialogues which were written before the *Laws*, we feel that he has become more or less of a ghost, and that he has no share in what is really the most important part of the discussion. It seems that it would have been better to leave him out altogether, and we can only regard his continued presence as a touching tribute to the man who had influenced Plato more than anyone else, a tribute he made at a time when he had definitely begun to leave Socrates behind.

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[8] *Theaet.* 143b, 5 *seq.*

After the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus*, we must, I believe, allow a very considerable interval before Plato wrote anything more for publication. He had apparently refuted the theory of forms in the *Parmenides*, and he had said not a word about it in the *Theaetetus*. The *Sophist* and the *Statesman* purport to be a continuation of the *Theaetetus*, but there is no attempt to make them appear really to be so. The place of Socrates is taken by an "Eleatic Stranger," who is a by no means orthodox follower of the great Parmenides. I do not wish to discuss his views now, except to suggest that we are to see in them an attempt to find some common ground with the school of Megara, which looked up to Parmenides as its founder. But there is one point which we must not overlook, and that is the growing adoption by Plato of the great innovation in style which had been introduced by his older contemporary, Isocrates, namely, the avoidance of "hiatus," a thing of which there is not the slightest trace in Plato's earlier works.

To understand this, so far as it is possible for us to do so, we must realize that it was an attempt to remedy what was certainly one of the great weaknesses of the Greek language. From the earliest date that we know anything about it, there was no word in Greek (with the exception of ἐκ and οὐκ, which are not real exceptions) which ended in a mute consonant, or indeed in any consonant at all, except ν, ρ, and ς.[1] Even λ and μ are impossible at the end of a Greek word. Evidently, this is a weakness in the language, and we can partly see why it seemed to Isocrates worth while to contend with it. It is not easy for us, who are quite accustomed to words ending in a consonant, to judge how far he was successful in this attempt, but it undoubtedly produced a great effect, and it is remarkable that Plato, who was some years younger than Isocrates, should have followed him in this matter, though not slavishly, from the date of the *Sophist* onwards. To us it makes him distinctly more difficult. Isocrates had little or nothing to say on the subjects with which Plato was now occupied, and it cannot be said that this new rule makes him appreciably harder to follow. But it is otherwise with Plato. In order to avoid "hiatus," he has often to arrange his words in what seems, to us at least, an unnatural order, and that certainly adds to our difficulty in understanding him. But it is very important, in view of the things that have been written about the feud between Plato and Isocrates, to realize that Plato thought it worth while to adopt the method of his supposed rival. Of course he was growing old, and was more and more anxious about his style. To us it seems to have become more difficult than it need have been, and we shall continue to feel that the style of his earlier writings, when he did not trouble at all about such things as "hiatus," was far better. But we cannot trust our judgment in such matters. We can only note that it confirms the dates we have assumed in a remarkable way, and in fact renders them quite certain.

[1] Conveniently remembered by the name Nereus.

Now it was somewhere about this time that Aristotle came to Athens as a young man and remained a member of the Academy till Plato's death. There can be no doubt that he looked up to the head of the school with the deepest veneration, but it is equally certain that they differed in temperament almost as much as it is possible for two philosophers to differ. In the first place, though, at the beginning, Aristotle was carried away by enthusiasm for Plato, it is certain that he never fully understood the teaching of the head of the Academy. That is only what we should expect. Aristotle was not an Athenian, but an Ionian, and by the time he came to Athens, Socrates had been dead for a generation, and it is not at all likely that he ever met anyone who had known him intimately except Plato. Moreover, Plato himself was probably not at Athens when Aristotle came there, and, even if he was, it was for a short time only. He had once more felt bound to do what he could to save the Greek world which seemed to be in great danger. This, as we shall see, was a thing Aristotle could not recognize, and least of all when, as was now the case, that danger threatened primarily the western world. Nevertheless, as I have said, there is not the least doubt that Aristotle looked up to Plato with the deepest veneration. We shall understand this more fully as we go on, and we shall see also in what direction he showed his own greatest originality.

We have seen that Plato did not publish his lectures in the Academy, but only such of his works as seemed necessary for his pupils and for a wider public, and that these alone have come down to us. It is practically certain that, like most other great teachers, he did not write his lectures; for the Academy remained faithful to its master's memory, and there is no reason to doubt that we still possess every word that Plato ever wrote. With Aristotle the case is quite different. He, too, wrote a large number of works for the public, and it was by these alone that he was known for several generations. He also gave lectures for about twenty years, but these remained unknown for nearly two centuries after his death. We are told by the geographer Strabo[10] that Theophrastus, Aristotle's successor, had left them to Neleus of Scepsis in the Troad, and that Neleus bequeathed them to his successors, who were not philosophers. The manuscripts rescued from the cellar at Scepsis, where they had been preserved, were only made known in the first century B.C., with the result that the published works of Aristotle, which had been previously known, were neglected and lost, but for some fragments which, however, are of very great value as giving us some hint of what his earlier position had been. It is only the other day that Professor Jaeger of Berlin has been able to give us some account of these more or less miscellaneous fragments which have passed muster so long as "the works of Aristotle."[11]

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[10] Strabo xiii. 54. p. 608. Ἐκ δὲ τῆς Σκήψεως οἵ τε Σωκρατικοὶ γεγόνασιν, Ἔραστος καὶ Κορίσκος, καὶ ὁ τοῦ Κορίσκου υἱὸς Νηλεύς, ἀνὴρ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλους ἠκροασμένος καὶ Θεοφράστου, διαδεδεγμένος δὲ τὴν βιβλιοθήκην τοῦ Θεοφράστου, ἐν ᾗ ἦν καὶ ἡ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους· ὁ γοῦν Ἀριστοτέλης τὴν ἑαυτοῦ Θεοφράστῳ παρέδωκεν, ᾧπερ καὶ τὴν σχολὴν ἀπέλιπε . . . . Θεόφραστος δὲ Νηλεῖ παρέδωκεν· ὁ δ' εἰς Σκῆψιν κομίσας τοῖς μετ' αὐτὸν παρέδωκεν, ἰδιώταις ἀνθρώποις, οἳ κατάκλειστα εἶχον τὰ βιβλία, οὐδ' ἐπιμελῶς κείμενα· ἐπειδὴ δὲ ᾔσθοντο τὴν σπουδὴν τῶν Ατταλικῶν βασιλέων, ὑφ' οἷς ἦν ἡ πόλις, ζητούντων βιβλία εἰς τὴν κατασκευὴν τῆς ἐν Περγάμῳ βιβλιοθήκης, κατὰ γῆς ἔκρυψαν ἐν διώρυγί τινι· ὑπὸ δὲ νοτίας καὶ σητῶν κακωθέντα ὀψέ ποτε ἀπέδοντο οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους Ἀπελλικῶντι τῷ Τηΐῳ πολλῶν ἀργυρίων τά τε Ἀριστορέλους καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοφράστου βιβλία· ἦν δὲ ὁ Ἀπελλικῶν φιλόβιβλος μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόσοφος· διὸ καὶ ζητῶν ἐπανόρθωσιν τῶν διαβρωμάτων εἰς ἀντίγραφα καινὰ μετήνεγκε τὴν γραφὴν ἀναπληρῶν οὐκ εὖ, καὶ ἐξέδωκεν ἁμαρτάδων πλήρη . . . . μετὰ τὴν τοῦ Ἀπελλικῶντος τελευτὴν Σύλλας ἦρε τὴν Ἀπελλικῶντος βιβλιοθήκην ὁ τὰς Ἀθήνας ἑλών, δεῦρο δὲ κομισθεῖσαν Τυραννίων τε ὁ γραμματικὸς διεχειρίσατο φιλαριστοτέλης ὤν κτλ. There can be no doubt that this is practically the truth. It is not to the point to quote passages from Theophrastus and Eudemus against it, as Zeller does, and Strabo is telling of what must have been well known in his own time.

Let us see first what we know of the life of Aristotle. He was born at Stagirus (or, as it came to be called, Stagira) on the east of the peninsula of Chalcidice in 364/3 B.C., the son of a medical man, Nicomachus, who had been court physician to the king of Macedon. His father must have died when he was quite young; for the next thing we hear of him is that his guardian, Proxenus, sent him to study at Athens in 368/7 B.C., when he was seventeen years old. After Plato founded the Academy, Athens was the natural place for an Ionian youth of intellectual ambitions to go; for at this time the Academy was the center of all higher study in Greece. But it so happened that, when Aristotle came there, Plato had become immersed in the affairs of Sicily, which we shall have to consider presently, and it is even probable that he was away from Athens when Aristotle arrived. It is certain at least that he went to Syracuse very shortly afterwards. In 361 B.C. Plato was once more called away to Sicily and he did not return till the next year. We see that, for the first ten years of Aristotle's membership of the Academy, the direct influence of Plato upon him can only have been intermittent at best. But there is no doubt at all that Aristotle was a voracious reader, and, in particular, that he found the *Phaedo* in the library of the Academy, and that it had a great influence upon him. It would almost be true to say that, in his early years at the Academy, Aristotle was more of a Socratic than a Platonist. One of his early works was the *Eudemus*, which was substantially based on the *Phaedo*. We know the date of this work (for Eudemus died in 354 B.C.)[12] and a little about it, from which we may infer with certainty that, at the age of thirty, Aristotle was still a Platonist and, what is more, a Platonist of an early type. We know something, too, of the *Protrepticus*, and we may note in it the strong conviction of the superiority of the theoretical or speculative life to any other. That remained Aristotle's belief, as we can still see from the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It was a different view from that of his master, Plato; but we must remember that Aristotle hardly had a city that he could call his own and, above all, that he was an Ionian.

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[11] *Aristoteles, Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*, von Werner Jaeger (Berlin, Weidmann, 1923).

In 348/7 Plato died, and his nephew Speusippus succeeded him as head of the Academy. There was nothing now to keep Aristotle at Athens. There is no need to suppose that he was jealous of Speusippus. At that time it was probably necessary that the head of such an institution as the Academy should be an Athenian citizen. The interesting point is rather that Aristotle and Xenocrates went off together to what may fairly be called a colony of the Academy which had been set up at Assos in Asia Minor. Aristotle remained there for three years, but, on the fall of his patron, Hermias of Atarneus, he removed to Mytilene in Lesbos, and remained there till 342 B.C., when Philip called him to Macedon to superintend the education of his son, Alexander the Great. We know very little of what Aristotle taught him, but we may be sure that Alexander was not much influenced by his distinguished instructor, who never could bring himself to understand that the kings of Macedon meant to save Greek civilization by founding an empire. It is one of the most curious facts in literary history that Aristotle never realized that, and that he might almost seem never to have heard of it. By 335 B.C. he was back at Athens, where he opened his school, the Lyceum, under the protection of the Macedonian governor, Antipater.

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[12] This Eudemus must not be confounded with Aristotle's disciple to whom we owe the *Eudemian Ethics*. See p. 63.

Now this means that Aristotle was absent from Athens for about thirteen years—from the age of thirty-seven to that of forty-nine—and we may be sure that these were the most important years of his life and, in particular, that they were the years in which he found himself. There can be no doubt that, even before he left Athens, his attention had been directed by Plato to biological questions, and it was natural that he should go on with these studies when he went to Asia Minor. At any rate they seem to have come to him almost as a revelation. He was, we must always remember, an Ionian, and his family was a medical one, so such pursuits would come naturally to him. He was not a mathematician, as Plato was, and consequently the mathematical form which Plato more and more gave to his theories did not appeal to him, and it may quite fairly be doubted whether he really understood it. In his dialogue *On Philosophy*, a great deal of which has been recovered by Bywater and Jaeger,[13] we find the definite announcement of Aristotle's discontent with this theory.

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[13] Jaeger, *Aristoteles*, p. 125 *seq.*

In it he criticized Plato's theory of "ideal numbers" and said that he could not sympathize with the doctrine "even if it is supposed that his opposition is due to a spirit of contentiousness."[14] That statement seems to be of later date than Book I of the *Metaphysics* where, though the doctrine of forms is criticized, it is spoken of throughout as a doctrine that "we" hold. There can hardly be any doubt of this, that it was Aristotle's passionate devotion to biology that led him to drop what no doubt seemed to him an unduly mathematical view of the world. It is an old story and the end of it is not yet.

It is, however, necessary to point out that Aristotle's rejection of the theory of forms, which he was too little of a mathematician to understand fully, and his return to Ionian philosophy, had certain very unfortunate results. In what are generally regarded as his most important works, everything is made to depend upon the spherical earth being at rest in the center of the universe, while the starry heavens go round it once in twenty-four hours. Now there can be no doubt that the Academy had already gone far beyond this, and that it was the reactionary astronomy of Aristotle that kept that science back till the Renaissance, when Copernicus and Galileo renewed the study of it by going back to the Platonic view, which has held the field ever since. On this side, then, Aristotle was merely reactionary and delayed the progress of science for centuries, and it is a pity that, while such of his works as are still studied are mainly of this reactionary character, his really great works, those which deal with biological subjects, are practically neglected. No one can really understand Aristotle unless he takes his work from that side and passes over his astronomical and physical theories as an anachronism. They could never have been seriously maintained by anyone who knew anything of the mathematics even of those days.

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[14] *Arist.* frg. 8 Rose . . . . *καὶ ἐν τοῖς διαλόγοις σαφέστατα κεραγὼς μὴ δύνασθαι τῷ δόγματι τούτῳ συμπαθεῖν, κἂν τις αὐτὸν οἴηται διὰ φιλονεικίαν ἀντιλέγειν.*

And there was another side on which Aristotle was weak. How little he understood the politics even of his own day appears clearly from the end of his life. He had been the tutor of Alexander the Great, but he hardly ever mentions his name, and is quite unconscious of the new world that he was bringing into being. Nor does he seem to have been conscious that his position at Athens during the last thirteen years of his life depended on the Macedonian Antipater. And yet, when Alexander died (323 B.C.) and Antipater left Athens, Aristotle had to take refuge at Chalcis in Euboea, where he died soon afterwards in his sixty-third year. It is worthy of notice that Plato had been head of the Academy till he was eighty, while Socrates was just over seventy when he was put to death at the height of his powers. The Greeks of this period lived to great ages, and there can be no doubt that Aristotle's comparatively early death has deprived us of that final revision of his system which he would, no doubt, have undertaken if he had been given time. Most of the best of what we have belongs to the period when he was not at Athens, and the last thirteen years of his life represent an incomplete stage, which was brought to an end by political events with which he had nothing to do, and in which, surprising as it may seem, he took no interest at all. If, as I believe, the *Nicomachaean Ethics* is his latest work, it is certain that the man who wrote the last two or three pages of it, had still something to say. But it is not yet time to try to work out the problem of how Aristotle's thought was developing when he died. Professor Jaeger has done a great work in raising the question.

It seemed necessary to say so much of Aristotle because he is generally much misunderstood, and he has even been given a higher place among philosophers than Plato himself. That, however, is a passing phase. In reality, Aristotle has never been of the first importance in the history of philosophy except as a sort of appendage to Plato. His philosophy died with his immediate successors, Theophrastus and Eudemus, and it was not till the Platonists of the last generation of the Academy wrote commentaries upon him that he can be said to have revived. And it is of the utmost importance to realize that this revival of Aristotelian study in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. was due to the Academy, and not to the school of Aristotle, which still existed in name but had lost all its importance. On the other hand, Plato's real teaching had never been committed to writing, and the memory of it had almost been lost, so that the Platonists of the Academy had to substitute for it the record of what was really a very different thing, the lectures of Aristotle. That is how the strange medley which we call Neoplatonism came into being.

In the West, though the Greek language had almost disappeared, the greater part of the *Timaeus* still survived in the Latin version of Chalcidius with an elaborate commentary, and the works of the Platonist Boethius were multiplied in many manuscripts. It was not till the thirteenth century that Aristotle was really revived for a short time, and that revival was cut short by the Renaissance of Letters which, by going back to Plato, set modern science on the right track once more.

CHAPTER V

PLATO AND DIONYSIUS

We have seen that Plato founded the Academy when he was about forty years old and that this was the real beginning of his philosophical as distinct from his artistic activity. Before that he had been in the main a great dramatist who set himself to preserve the memory of the fifth century B.C., when the leading figure from his point of view had been Socrates. I have called special attention to the fact that there is in none of his writings up to this date any certain allusion to anything that happened in the fourth century B.C., except the death of Socrates,[1] which took place in the first year of it. In all these dialogues, Socrates is the chief figure, and they are plainly intended to be first of all a memorial to Plato's master.

But now it was different. From this time onwards Plato devoted himself with ardor to the teaching of philosophy, and there is an interval of probably not less than ten years between the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*. All we can be said to know of this period depends on inference (which is, of course, uncertain), except in so far as we can partially reconstruct it from the development of science in the next age. We can see, however, in a general way, the direction in which Plato's thought was moving. Socrates had felt already that what was needed in the first place was the union of eastern and western science, and he had realized the greater importance of the latter. He seems, indeed, to have underestimated the contribution to science of eastern Ionia and to have been somewhat imperfectly informed about the work of the Pythagoreans of Italy. Plato, on the other hand, had visited Italy, and had learnt much from Archytas, which he made the foundation of his teaching in the Academy. But it is important to remember that, as a matter of fact, we have next to no definite information about what he taught in the Academy at this time. If we knew more of Archytas, it is probable that we could fill up the gap rather better than is now possible. That it was mainly mathematical, I cannot see any reason to doubt.

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[1] There are one or two such allusions which are generally recognized, I believe wrongly. But in any case they are not of any importance.

We do know, however, one fact which is of the first importance, and that is that it must have been toward the end of this period that Eudoxus came from Asia Minor to Athens and brought his school with him. He was one of the leading mathematicians of the day and had studied in Egypt. We can only see dimly what his reaction to Plato was, but we may be sure that such mathematics as he had learnt in Egypt was not by any means on the same level as that which Archytas taught at Tarentum. At any rate, it is significant that Aristotle, in his latest work, the *Nicomachaean Ethics*,[2] has left us a striking tribute to him. This gives us a hint of the Ionian inability to appreciate the strict mathematical method which characterized the Italian school. We shall see that the Academy, being situated at Athens, inevitably became more and more Ionian in its outlook, though it is certain that Plato himself held fast to the more strictly scientific methods of the Italians.

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[2] *Eth. Nic.* K 2. 1172a *seq.* I follow Jaeger in dating the *Nicomachean Ethics* late in Aristotle's life.

This brings us to a point which is very generally overlooked, and it will be well to insist on it here. The Athenians, as I have said, were not interested either in science or in philosophy, though they had produced Socrates and Plato. The Ionians of the east were now subject to Persia, and it is certain that they flocked to Athens at this time, and that they did so because the Academy was there. In the later years of Plato's life, the Academy had become an Ionian rather than an Athenian institution, and this is a fact that requires special notice. I venture to think that the enthusiastic way in which Aristotle speaks of Eudoxus in the *Ethics* is a sign of it. It makes us feel that he had never attained to Plato's mathematical standpoint.

In any case, it was impossible for Plato to continue for long to devote himself to inculcating Pythagorean mathematics and astronomy into the minds of young Ionians to whom such things were strange. Just about the time that Aristotle and Eudoxus came to Athens, he was once more involved in practical politics, and we must now turn our attention to that. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to consider how far we are entitled to make use of what is, on the face of it, our best source of information on this period of Plato's life, the collection of thirteen epistles which was included in his genuine works in the canon of Thrasylus.

To begin with, I do not think it is possible to suppose that the first of these epistles is a genuine letter of Plato's, though it certainly bears his name in the best MSS.[3] I do not believe, either, that it is, in the ordinary sense, a forgery, but I think it is clear that it has not been rightly included in our Platonic text. Nor do I feel at all confident that any of the theories which have been invented to explain it are satisfactory. I believe, however, that it is a genuine fourth-century letter, which was preserved in the Academy for some reason we can no longer clearly see. I attach no importance to the fact that it is headed "Plato to Dionysius"; for I believe that all these headings are of later date.[4] But I do not feel sure that any of the other twelve epistles are spurious, and I am specially impressed by the fact that the more carefully written of them agree in the most remarkable way with the other works composed by Plato at the time in certain stylistic peculiarities, such as the avoidance of "hiatus."

In particular, I cannot doubt that the thirteenth epistle is genuine. It is the very earliest in date, and was written after Plato's first return to Athens from the court of Dionysius II. It is a real private letter, unlike the seventh and eighth, and it deals mainly with details. German scholars usually reject it, and some of them have even suggested that it was written by an enemy in order to misrepresent Plato's attitude to Dionysius. In fact, what they object to is that it is a private letter, and written at a time when it was necessary above all things to avoid annoying Dionysius. Plato had to assume that the tyrant would make all things right for Dion before long, and a certain caution was undoubtedly called for if that result was to be secured. I do not believe that a forger would have seen the extreme delicacy of the situation or would have avoided so carefully saying anything that might prejudice Dion with Dionysius. That is just the sort of mistake that a literary forger regularly makes.

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[3] This is quite clear from Bekker's edition, though he substitutes Δίων for Πλάτων in his text. That, however, is only a conjecture of late date. The reading of A is certainly Πλάτων Διονυσίῳ εὖ πράττειν.

[4] It may be worth noting that in *Ep.* VII 338c 5 and 350a 6 Archytas appears in the Ionic form Ἀρχύτης, while *Epp.* IX and XII are headed Ἀρχύτᾳ Ταραντίνῳ.

I propose, then, to give a short account of Plato's intervention in the affairs of Sicily based mainly on the *Epistles*. It will be seen, I think, that we can get from them an entirely natural and human story, such as no forger could have constructed, unless he was a man of quite extraordinary dramatic skill. It may be added that no forger would have arranged the letters in so loose an order as we find them.

In the year 368/7 B.C. that remarkable man Dionysius I died, after reigning over Syracuse and much of Sicily for thirty-eight years. At the time of his death he was sixty-three years old, and it is important to remember that he was a man of obscure origin, and that his long reign was due solely to his personal capacity. It is true, of course, that he had varying fortunes, and that at the end of his career he had not by any means been able to destroy the Carthaginian supremacy in the west of the island. Indeed, he had been defeated by the Carthaginian Hanno the year before his death. He had, however, limited the dominion of Carthage to the west of the island, and had reduced the Greek colonies of the eastern and southern parts of it to the position of subjects of Syracuse. If he had lived, he might have done more, and in that case he would have made the Punic Wars unnecessary, and we might have had to look to Syracuse rather than to Rome for the origin of our civilization. Dionysius was necessarily a man of no great scruples, but it is important to observe that he had literary as well as military ambitions. It is specially interesting to note that he competed more than once for the prize for tragedy at Athens, and that, the year before his death, his play entitled *The Ransom of Hector* actually won the first prize. Of course, by this time, tragedy was really a dead thing at Athens, but nevertheless that is a striking fact. Dionysius seems to have been, not only a very unscrupulous man, but also an extremely interesting personage in other ways.

It could not be said that anyone had the right to succeed Dionysius I, and it is most probable that he had put off deciding the point in his own mind till it was too late. It is hard to believe that he had meant to leave his power to his son Dionysius, who was not in any way fitted to succeed him. He had certainly not been brought up in such a manner as to prepare him to carry on his father's work. On the contrary, he had been kept in seclusion and allowed to occupy himself with such pursuits as amateur carpentry and turning. It is not uncommon for a man who holds the supreme power solely as the result of his own activity to look with jealousy on his natural successor and to put off making arrangements for the continuance of his power till it is too late to do anything. Dionysius I was undoubtedly that kind of man. He was jealous and suspicious of everyone. It may be noted, however, that he does not appear to have had any hostile feelings towards Dion, who was a man of very different views to his own. His attitude to him seems to have been quite different to that he took up to Philistus, who was really much more in sympathy with him. Philistus had been exiled and had spent his time in composing a history of Dionysius I, which is unfortunately lost. We must remember that Dionysius, from the nature of the case, had no legal title to the position he had seized, and it seems very possible that he meant to look out for someone to succeed him when his work was finished. Unfortunately he died before the way was clear, and above all before he was the ruler of a united Sicily, and, in the absence of any definite arrangements, he was succeeded by his son Dionysius II, who was in every way unqualified for the position. He was nearly thirty years old and had not been trained for any such duties. It is one of the advantages of a legitimate succession that the man who holds the power for the time being is less apt to feel jealous of his natural heir, and is more willing to see that he gets properly trained for what is to be the work of his life. However that may be, it is certain that Dionysius II was called upon to succeed his father before there was a chance of any other arrangement being made.

Dion, however, was not the sort of man to content himself with the position of being the mere adviser of the sovereign; he aimed at being practically ruler himself, above all in matters of foreign policy. He was a friend of Archytas and he had joined the Academy at Athens when he was exiled from Sicily.

He was certainly Plato's favorite pupil, though it is clear that Plato saw very well the flaw in his character; for, at a later date, he wrote a letter to him which ends with these words—

> Reflect also that some think you are not so obliging as you ought to be. Let it not escape you that popular favor is a means to achievement, while an arbitrary temper has solitude for company.[5]

It was only to be expected that Dion should show some weakness of this kind. He had learnt, indeed, in the Academy that it was not enough to be a conventional tyrant, though it cannot have been a very easy lesson for him to learn; but his natural character came out when power at last fell into his hands. He was, as it were, half converted, and that explains his ultimate failure. For the present, however, the influence of Plato prevailed, and Dion urged him to come to Sicily and undertake the neglected education of the new tyrant.

We may well believe that Plato felt reluctant to go. He knew what the history of Sicily had been during the last generation; for he had been there when he was about forty and Dion was only twenty. The Academy was flourishing, and it was just at this time that Aristotle joined it as a youth of about seventeen, and that Eudoxus came to Athens with his school. Plato must certainly have felt that Dionysius was not exactly the sort of prince whose training he was looking forward to. It is very significant that the best minds of Athens at this time had given up all hope of the old form of government. We have seen that Plato had ceased to take any interest in Athenian politics after the death of Socrates, and Isocrates spent much of his time in writing discourses to promising princes in one part of Greece after another. The leading men of Athens at this date seem to have felt that the future did not lie any more with the republican form of constitution. The chief thinkers had their thoughts fixed on some new form of polity, a dream which must have seemed strange to the disciples of Plato, most of whom were by this time apparently Ionians. Dion, however, was a member of the Academy, and he was no Ionian but a Syracusan, and it is not at all remarkable that he prevailed, and that Plato left the Academy to see what he could do in Sicily. We cannot help feeling what a misfortune it was that it was too early for him to have the training of Alexander the Great. That fell to Aristotle some years after Plato's death, but Aristotle was quite unfitted for the task, and Alexander courteously set him aside when he became king. Aristotle was too much of an Ionian to understand the new conditions which had arisen. It seems, indeed, that, if Plato had lived a few years longer, he would have found the man he was looking for in Alexander. But it was not to be, and the Macedonian prince had to carry out the great work his father had left him without the help and guidance that Plato could undoubtedly have given him.

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[5] *Ep.* V.

We can imagine the dismay of the younger members of the Academy when Plato left for Sicily. They had hardly realized that he felt it his duty to "descend in his turn"[6] into the strife of politics, and we have seen that he had completely turned his back upon the affairs of Athens. In these the majority of

[6] *Rep.* 520c 1. καταβατέον ἐν μέρει.

his pupils took not the slightest interest, and they must have felt startled that their master felt bound to follow the call of Dion to Sicily. In fact, Dion must have seemed a somewhat strange figure to most of them. He had been accustomed to a more active political life than they had, and he was very rich. It is of the greatest importance that we should realize the difference between the rapidly increasing number of Ionians in the Academy and Dion, who came from the most powerful Dorian state of the time. But Plato knew very well what was required of him and, however natural it was that he should refuse to take any part in the political life of Athens, it would have been quite another matter to decline the task to which he was called by Archytas and Dion, though he must have felt from the first that it was one in which success was doubtful.

At any rate Plato had no idea of letting things be rushed. Dionysius was nearly thirty years old, and his education had been shamefully neglected. According to Plato's own view, he ought to have begun serious study when he was not more than twenty, and it was now nearly ten years too late. Plato's task would have been impossible, had it not been that Dionysius had apparently a real gift for mathematics, and took to the study with enthusiasm.[7] Of course, he was naturally exposed to the sort of misunderstanding into which those who have begun too late are apt to fall. Still, we can see that, so far, Plato was on the right track.

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[7] This seems to follow at once from the account Plato himself gives of the enthusiasm Dionysius displayed for mathematics during his absence (*Ep.* VII 339a *seq.*). It is true that, on his return to Syracuse, he was more impressed by the errors into which Dionysius had fallen; but it was something that Archytas seemed satisfied with his progress.

It is plain, however, that there was strong opposition to Dion's schemes. We do not know enough about it to do it justice, but we can see how natural it was that the historian Philistus (or Philistides, as Plato calls him the only time he mentions him)[1] should set himself in opposition to Dion. He had been recalled from exile just before Plato came to Syracuse, and he was able to destroy all chances of making a constitutional ruler of Dionysius. Four months after Plato's arrival, a letter of Dion to the Carthaginian government was intercepted, in which he urged the authorities of Carthage to communicate with him in the first instance regarding terms of peace, and this gave Philistus the opportunity for which he was waiting. The letter was shown to Dionysius, and Dion was sent into exile. Plato, however, was not allowed to depart, but was kept for some time in the citadel. At last, when it became necessary (or was represented as necessary by Philistus) that Dionysius should take the field in person, Plato was allowed to go home, with the promise that when Dionysius was once more free, he should be recalled and that Dion should then be restored.

Now certain things appear pretty clearly from the story that has just been related. In the first place, it is plain that Dion showed great want of tact, and that Philistus was far cleverer than Dion was. All through Dion proved himself quite incapable of taking the secondary rôle which, as things were, it was really necessary for him to assume. He knew perfectly well, of course, that Dionysius was quite incapable of managing things for himself, but he did not see that it was necessary to let him suppose he was acting independently. In the second place, it is obvious that Dionysius was very jealous of Plato's friendship for Dion, and that he was anxious to have Plato all for himself. It seems clear that this was so even now, and it is the only possible explanation of subsequent events. It means, of course, that Dionysius had become sincerely attached to Plato, who must have seemed to him, badly trained as he had been, something quite new. It is, at any rate, quite plain that there was no quarrel between Plato and Dionysius at this stage. The whole tone of *Epistle XIII* shows this, and I feel that, so far from being a forgery, it is, in many ways, the most important document in the whole collection. It is a strictly private communication, dealing with purely personal matters, and it was certainly written without any suspicion that it would ever be published. On his way home to Athens, Plato paid another visit to the Pythagorean Archytas at Tarentum.

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[1] *Ep.* III. 315e 3.

If the account I have given is anything like the truth, it may be assumed that Dionysius was not really sincere in his promise to become reconciled to Dion, but it is certain that he was determined to get Plato back at all costs. In Plato's absence he even tried to carry on his mathematical studies, and he made the subject quite fashionable at his court. We may be sure that Philistus saw nothing to object to in that. He was what is called a practical man, and this new amusement of Dionysius must have seemed to him much on a level with his earlier enthusiasm for wood carving and turning. But Dionysius was determined to get Plato back at all costs. At first, Plato declined to return unless Dion was reinstated; but Dion himself urged him to go, and so did Archytas at Tarentum, who ought to have been a good judge. He assured Plato that Dionysius was now enthusiastic about mathematics, and that everything would go well. Accordingly, Plato made up his mind "to recross Charybdis"[1] (361 B.C.). He did this with great misgivings, but he could hardly have resisted the pressure that was put upon him by men whom he trusted. But it was not long before Plato found out that Dionysius had not the slightest intention of recalling Dion, and the inevitable breach came. Plato wished to go home, but Dionysius would not let him. Of course no ship captain would take him as a passenger in the circumstances, and he had to wait for a whole year. At last a violent quarrel broke out on the occasion of a military revolt. Dionysius made Heraclides, one of his officers, responsible for this, and Plato with great difficulty got him off. Dionysius could not forgive the way in which he had been shamed into an act of clemency, and reproached Plato bitterly with having hindered him in the work of reform and the liberation of the Greek cities under Carthaginian rule. Instead of that, he said, he had made him learn geometry! Plato was excluded from the court and was practically kept a prisoner until, on the intercession of Archytas, he was allowed to return to Athens (360 B.C.). Even then, there was no final breach. Dionysius kept writing to Plato for explanation of difficult points in geometry and Plato answered him. He even, much to Plato's annoyance, wrote a book, in which he professed to reveal the secret of Plato's philosophy. That was a thing Plato himself had never done, and which he regarded as neither desirable nor possible. It is quite clear that Archytas and Dion were right in believing that Dionysius had some natural gifts, but it is clear too that they had not been cultivated early enough. He was vain and petulant, no doubt, and his treatment of Dion was not to his credit; but his attachment to Plato was obviously sincere, and we cannot help feeling a little sorry for him when we remember what he might have been if his father had given him a chance when he was young enough to profit by it. And we must remember too that Dion must have seemed to him singularly unsympathetic, and that Plato's attachment to Dion must have been highly irritating.

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[1] *Ep.* VII. 345e 2. ὄφρ' ἔτι τὴν ὀλοὴν ἀναμετήσαιρμι χάρυβδιν (from *Od.* XII. 428).

Plato was now back at Athens, and we shall see that, old as he was, he had still much to do there. At Syracuse Dion was still to be reckoned with. He was not the sort of man to wait forever, and he determined to assert his position by force of arms. He began to collect adherents all over the Greek world. Plato could not afford to take any personal part in the matter. He was now about seventy years old, and we can easily understand his standing aside. But Dion was able to get the support of Plato's nephew, Speusippus, of Eudemus of Cyprus, and others. Philistus was waiting for him in the Adriatic, but Dion boldly sailed across the open sea instead of following the usual coast route. Once landed in Sicily, he found support on every side, and it seems that, if he had been a little more conciliatory, all would have been as well as it could be now. In the first place, however, Heraclides appeared on the scene and had to be given a share in the government, which proved a constant source of weakness and which led, at one time, to the temporary deposition of Dion. I do not think it worth while for our purpose to speak in detail of the three-cornered struggle between Dionysius, Dion, and Heraclides; it will be enough to indicate its result. Heraclides was murdered at the instigation of Dion, and Dion himself fell by the dagger of Callippus, an Athenian, who had been his most confidential adviser. Callippus held precarious power for a year, when he was once more expelled by the partisans of Dion.

The old man Plato felt deeply the discredit which the treachery of Callippus had brought upon Athens, but he never wavered in his belief in the integrity of Dion. So far as we can see, it would have been easy at first for Dion, who was a member of the royal family, to brush Dionysius aside and to seize the power for himself; but, instead of that, he did his best, in conjunction with Archytas and Plato, to fit the young prince for the position he was to occupy. He was embittered by the return he received for this act of self-denial, and we cannot wonder at it. His property had been confiscated, and his wife compelled to marry another man, so we can hardly be too angry with him for what he did, and it is fair to remember that he waited till Plato had had another chance.

When the whole scheme had failed, Plato once more attempted to do something for Sicily. The partisans of Dion asked him for advice on the settlement of the constitution, and this gave him the opportunity of writing the two open letters which seem to be accepted as genuine by everyone now. The first of these (*Epistle VII*) is a dignified defense of his political attitude throughout his life, and it bears witness at once to his disappointment in men whom he had trusted and to his unshaken confidence in his own principles. He declares that he is ready to advise the partisans of Dion, if they are really sincere in their desire to realize his plans. In the next letter (*Epistle VIII*) he suggested a scheme for the government of Syracuse, which was too statesmanlike to be adopted by ambitious party men. He did not live to see the brief restoration of Dionysius in 345 B.C. and his final expulsion from Syracuse in the next year by Timoleon. After that, Dionysius lived the life of a dilettante at Corinth, where Aristoxenus saw him and asked him the cause of his quarrel with Plato. Dionysius answered that no one tells a tyrant the truth, and that he had been robbed of Plato's good will by want of frankness in his so-called friends.[10]

Plato saw that the Syracusan empire was in danger of falling into the hands of the Carthaginians and the Oscans.[11] It was that he set himself to prevent; and, if Dionysius had been a little younger when he took him in hand, he might very well have succeeded. As it was, the Punic War broke out just fifty years after the final expulsion of Dionysius II by Timoleon, and Sicily was saved from the Carthaginians by Rome.

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[10] Plutarch *Timoleon* 15.

[11] *Ep.* VIII 353e 2. *ἥξει δέ, ἐάνπερ τῶν εἰκότων γίγνηταί τι καὶ ἀπευκτῶν, σχεδὸν εἰς ἐρημίαν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς φωνῆς Σικελία πᾶσα, Φοινίκων ἢ Ὀπικῶν μεταβαλοῦσα εἴς τινα δυναστείαν καὶ κράτος.*

CHAPTER VI

THE LAWS

It would be a mistake to suppose that Plato's failure with Dionysius bore no fruit, even at the time. He was now, it is true, an old man; but nevertheless it was just this failure which was the occasion of his taking in hand what was to prove his most elaborate work, at least in intention. I make that reservation because I feel that he did not live to give the last touches to the *Laws*, and there is a perfectly credible tradition that it was finally published after his death by Philip of Opus. It is not to be supposed, however, that the editor did more than arrange the material which Plato had dictated to him, and he was certainly very scrupulous in the matter. There is one place, for instance, where it is laid down that men may marry at the age of twenty-five and two others where the age is given as thirty.[1] That has not been altered by Philip of Opus, who must, surely, have noticed the contradiction. I do not, therefore, believe that Philip took any serious liberties with Plato's text.

In the third *Epistle*,[2] which was written shortly after 360 B.C., when Plato was about seventy years old, we read that, when at Syracuse, he had been working with Dionysius at "preambles" (προοίμια) to laws, and this is explained in a passage of the *Laws* itself,[3] where we are told that the legislator should always preface his laws by a "prelude" or "preamble" in which he explains their motive. We also get a hint of this method in the *Politicus*, which, as we have seen, is earlier in date. There we are told[4] that we must first lay down the principles which are to guide us in our legislation, and then go on to embody them in our detailed enactments. The general principles will be such as the ideal ruler, who can dispense with laws altogether, would approve; the particular enactments will take due account of the state for which they are intended. We see that Plato had already a clear idea of the form legislation should take.

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[1] *Legg.* [2] *Ep.* III. 316a.

Nevertheless the *Laws* is by no means easy reading. That, of course, is to be accounted for, to a large extent, by the fact that it is the work of a man who had reached the age of threescore years and ten, and we must allow also for its having been, in all probability, dictated. The style is tortuous and we can hardly believe that we are reading the same author who had written the *Republic* in his youth. On the other hand, we must keep in mind the fact that the purpose of the two works is quite different. The *Republic* was intended, in the main, to bring before us the political ideas of Socrates in the Periclean age; the *Laws* is the work of a man who was the professional head of a philosophical school, many members of which were personally interested in the work of legislation. I have spoken already of the

[3] *Legg.* 722d *seq.* [4] *Polit.* 316a.

avoidance of "hiatus." To my ear, it does not improve the writer's style, and it certainly leads to strange inversions which, to us, obscure the meaning. But we cannot judge fairly in this matter. We can only say that the work would have been easier and more pleasant for us to read if Plato had not felt bound to follow Isocrates in this matter.

On the other hand, we can hardly regret that Plato no longer felt bound to give Socrates a place in this dialogue. He was really superfluous in all his later works and played a very small part in them, except in the *Philebus*. We cannot but feel that, in the *Sophist*, the *Politicus*, and the *Timaeus*, he would have been better left out altogether. And yet Plato still clung to him in one respect. Though he is not one of the *dramatis personae* in the *Laws*, it is still in form a dialogue between an Athenian Stranger, who is more or less Plato himself, a Cretan, and a Spartan. It is no small testimony to his master that, even in his latest work, which from its subject hardly lends itself to such a thing, Plato still felt bound to adhere to the dialogue form in which, when he was young, he had portrayed the great teacher who wrote nothing at all. But he felt, now that he himself had returned to practical politics that, here at least, Socrates was an insufficient guide; and that, no doubt, is the reason why he gives so incomplete an account of the *Republic* at the beginning of the *Timaeus*.[5]

And there is another thing we may certainly learn from the *Laws*, namely, that, in spite of his disappointment with Dionysius, a disappointment which he had more or less foreseen, Plato held fast to the belief that a philosopher working along with a young "tyrant" would bring about the greatest blessings, and this conviction he reasserts emphatically.[6] Failing that, however, much might still be hoped from the influence of philosophy on lawgivers and framers of constitutions. He did not, therefore, think it an unworthy use of his last years to codify what seemed best to him in Greek law, and especially in the law of Athens, supplementing it, where that seemed desirable, with new legislative proposals of his own.

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[5] Cf. above, p. 51, *n*. 5. See especially *Timaeus* 19c 8. ταῦτ' οὖν . . . . ἐμαυτοῦ μὲν αὐτὸς κατέγνωκα μή ποτε ἂν δυνατὸς γενέσθαι τοὺς ἄνδρας καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἱκανῶς ἐγκωμιάσαι. There is no such reluctance in the *Republic* itself.

Now here we come upon a point which it is not at all easy for us in the United Kingdom to understand; for we have no constitution such as you have in the United States. For instance, it is commonly expected that our government will "reform the House of Lords," that is to say, that a bill will be introduced in the House of Commons, modifying the constitution and powers of the Upper House. The House of Lords will, of course, have the opportunity of proposing amendments to this bill, but no one supposes that it will adhere to them unless they are accepted by the House of Commons. The reason of this is that the King, on the advice of his Ministers, may add members to the House of Lords in sufficient numbers to pass any measure that is desired. The members of the House of Lords, of course, know this, and that is quite sufficient to keep them from taking up a merely obstructive attitude. I need not point out how much more elaborate and difficult would be the task of modifying the constitution and powers of the United States Senate. It would, in fact, require a revolution. Now, in this point the states of Greece and the United States are alike and quite different from the Roman or the British, which are alike at least in this, that they have no constitution in the strict sense of the word. Greek states, on the other hand, resembled the United States in this respect, that they had written constitutions which could only be altered by a very deliberate and cumbrous process or else by a violent revolution.

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[6] *Legg.* 709e, 6. *Τυραννουμένην μοι δότε τὴν πόλιν, φήσει, τύραννος δ' ἔστω νέος καὶ μνήμων καὶ εὐμαθὴς καὶ ἀνδρεῖος καὶ μεγαλοπεπὴς φύσει κτλ.*

This explains why it was that so many Greek states applied to the Academy for an expert legislator to remodel their constitutions. Plutarch mentions several cases of this kind.[7]

Plato's authorship of the *Laws* is sufficiently guaranteed by the criticism of Aristotle,[8] but it seems to be generally supposed even now that the short treatise called the *Epinomis* is in a different case, and that it is, in fact, the work of Philip of Opus. That view, however, is based solely on a statement of Diogenes Laertius, which seems to apply equally to the *Laws* as a whole. It is certain, indeed, that the *Epinomis* is a different and later work than the *Laws*, and its very remarkable title, which no one but its author would have been likely to venture upon, indicates that it is a sort of appendix to the larger treatise. The speakers, however, are the same as those in the

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[7] Plutarch *adv. Col.* 1126c "Plato sent Aristonymus to the Arcadians, Pharmio to Elis, Menedemus to Pyrrha. Eudoxus and Aristotle wrote laws for Cnidus and Stagirus. Alexander asked Xenocrates for advice about kingship; the man who was sent by Alexander to the Greek inhabitants of Asia . . . . Delius of Ephesus, an associate of Plato." That, of course, takes us beyond the lifetime of Plato himself, but it indicates what was one of the chief activities of the school which he founded.

[8] It was, however, at one time disputed by Zeller, *Platonische Studien* (1839).

Laws, and, if we look at the linguistic peculiarities of the *Epinomis*, we see that they are practically identical with those of the *Laws* itself. I should say rather that the *Epinomis* is, to all appearance, a work dictated by a very old man, who was anxious to leave behind him some record of his last discoveries. One feels, I think, that it was a great effort, and that he was hardly able to do it as he would have done some years earlier, but that is surely just what we should look for in the last work of a man like Plato. We cannot expect him, when eighty years old, to expound things with the clearness of forty years earlier.

There can be no doubt that the *Laws* was written with a distinctly practical aim. It was intended to serve as a guide to the many legislators whom the Academy sent out at this period to revise the constitutions of such Greek states as felt the need of a legislator.[9] This explains much of what strikes us as an intolerable mass of detailed legislation on small points, as we are apt to think them. It is well to remember in this connection that the *Institutes* called by the name of Justinian deal at considerable length with such questions as the ownership of stray animals and swarming bees. It is not to be supposed that these questions are treated entirely for their own sake by the Roman lawyers; it is rather because such simple instances are the best for bringing out the fundamental principles of law. At any rate, it is significant that this feature of Roman law goes back to no less a man than Plato. Of course there are other things in the *Laws* for which we shall find no parallel in the Roman jurists, whose views were decidedly narrower and, as it is called, more "practical" than Plato's, and to some of them I shall have to call your attention later; all I wish to emphasize at present is the fact that in the *Laws* we find close parallels in abundance to Justinian and still earlier Roman jurists.

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[9] See above, p. 85, n. 7.

And this brings me to a point which has been too much ignored, owing to the very unfortunate specialism which has been characteristic of the nineteenth century. Students of Roman law have not usually read the *Laws* of Plato, and the few scholars who have read that work generally know nothing about Roman law. Yet the great Cujas had seen the truth already. "Our authorities," he said, "have borrowed many things from Plato."[10] We are beginning to see more clearly how that happened. Plato's *Laws* is, to a great extent, the foundation of Hellenistic law, a subject of which we are learning to know something from the discoveries of papyri in recent years, and what we call Roman law begins to seem a good deal less Roman than it did. The fact is that, when Rome came into contact with non-Roman peoples, it soon became evident that the principles of Roman civil law could not be easily adapted to the relations between Romans and foreigners, that is especially to the relations between Romans and the Greeks of Southern Italy and Sicily, and that other rules must be applied to them. With the usual fluency and adaptability of Roman institutions, this was carried out by the *praetor peregrinus*, who embodied in his edict the principles on which he proposed to decide cases which involved the relations of Romans with foreigners or of foreigners with one another. The edict was handed down from praetor to praetor with such modifications as were called for from time to time, and ultimately became a regular body of law, the *ius honorarium*. It was, of course, inevitable that many of its provisions should be adapted from the laws of the Hellenic states with which the Romans came in contact, and we have seen that these were largely the work of the Academy. It is not, in my opinion, too much to say that what we call Roman Law is not so much Roman as Hellenistic, and that it has its origin in the *Laws* of Plato. The Civil Law of the Quirites was archaic and cumbrous, and became of less and less importance as time went on. It was kept up at Rome itself, mainly by certain aristocratic families and in connection with certain priesthoods; but we must never forget that Rome imposed peace upon the world by extending Roman citizenship wider and wider, so that, before long, the Roman emperor was usually anything but a Roman in the strict sense of the word. That, of course, was an idea quite beyond the range of any Greek, but it is fair to observe that it was just the capacity of the Romans for assimilating Greek institutions that led to the growth of the Roman Empire. That is one reason among others why it will be found impossible in the long run to study Latin with any intelligence without studying Greek too.

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[10] See Cuiacii Comm. in lib. xlix Pauli ad edictum, ad § *ad Namusam et seq.*: *multa . . . . auctores nostri ex Platone mutuati sunt.* Jacques de Cujas (1520–1590) was a typical scholar in the old sense, and is chiefly remembered now by his remark *nihil hoc ad edictum praetoris*, with which he dismissed the religious controversies of his time.

Of course there are many things in Plato's *Laws* which must seem irrevelant to a Roman jurist, but that is due to the wider range which legislation necessarily takes from the Greek point of view. There is, for instance, the whole question of theology, which I propose to reserve for a future lecture. That, to a Roman lawyer, was not a matter with which he had to do. There is also the question of the fundamental conceptions of science, in which hardly any Roman took any interest at all. And, of course, the early books of the *Laws* contain much that is only half seriously meant. That was Plato's way in writing dialogues; he was accustomed to begin half in jest and only gradually to come to the real point at issue. If, as I believe, the *Laws* was dictated to Philip of Opus by an old man, it is only natural that those preliminaries should be unduly spun out and that a considerable portion of them should leave us cold. We have to remind ourselves that we are dealing with the work of a man over seventy, who had not quite realized that his earlier skill in introducing such matter had disappeared. But nevertheless we are surprised to find, as we read on, that Plato still preserved to the full his power of dealing with the most minute details of practical legislation, and further that he had a far more complete view of the long course of human history than ever dawned on the mind of Aristotle. If we read the *Laws* in the right spirit, we shall soon find the source of all that is best in the *Politics*, combined with an infinitely broader historical outlook. We have seen that Aristotle had no success in dealing with Alexander the Great; Plato, with his wider range of historical insight, would have been able to influence the king of Macedon in quite a different manner. Unluckily he had to waste his energies on Dionysius, who was a man of infinitely inferior character.

But, as I have indicated already, there is a great deal in Plato's *Laws* which is not to be found in the Roman jurists, and which would be regarded as quite irrelevant by strict adherents of the Roman system. That was inevitable since the Romans themselves were not as a rule interested either in science or in religion. It is worth while, however, to observe that the great change which came over the study of law in the nineteenth century was in its essence a return to the broader Platonic view. The modern jurist takes full account of the geography and history of peoples as well as of the legal machinery which they have invented to regulate their relations. I propose, therefore, to give you an example of Plato's historical insight which may, I think, be compared very favorably with similar work done in the nineteenth century, and stands far above anything that was produced in Greece in ancient times. I do not propose to take this from the *Laws* itself, but from the *Critias*, which is an unfinished dialogue, but which must have been written about the same time as the early part of the *Laws* or not long before. My reason for doing so is that it deals with historical Athens and not with an imaginary colony to be founded in Crete. Of course the Critias who is the chief speaker of this unfinished work is not the later Critias who was one of the Thirty, but his grandfather, and one of Plato's own great-grandfathers.[11] Few Greek scholars have read the *Timaeus* and *Critias* with any attention or they would surely have seen this.

It is in the latter unfinished dialogue that we find the story of Atlantis, which some have sought to identify with America! I do not intend to discuss that point just now; I wish rather to call your attention to the wonderful accuracy of the picture Plato has drawn of the physical structure of his own country, Attica, which strikes us almost as if it had been written by a modern geologist. You will search Aristotle in vain for such an anticipation of modern science. Critias[12] says:

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[11] See above, p. 28, *n.* 13.

> There had been many great floods in the course of the nine thousand years—for that is the number of years that has passed from that time to this—and in that period the earth flowing down from the heights does not, as in other regions, make a silt worth talking about, but flowing round constantly in a circle disappears into the depths. So there is left, as in small islands, compared with what had been there, just, as it were, the bones of a body that has fallen sick, all the earth that is fertile and soft having flowed away, and only the thin body of the land being left. But at that time the land being inviolate had hills and high mounds, and the plains that now exist were full of fertile earth, and had much timber on the hills, of which there are signs even now; for some of the hills now have nourishment for bees only, but it is no long time since thick wood was cut from them for the greatest buildings, of which the rafters are still preserved.

I should have been glad to go on with this passage and to discuss it more fully; but can only recommend it strongly to those who care to look at it. They will see, if I am not mistaken, that Plato was well acquainted with the process of denudation, that he gave an extremely accurate account of it, and that it is evident that he thought it quite appropriate to put into the mouth of the elder Critias a character sketch of the physical geography and geology of Attica.

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[12] *Critias* 111a, 6 *seq.* I have omitted one or two points which would require too long an explanation.

So, in the *Laws* itself, you will find that the Athenian Stranger begins by asking questions about the physical geography of the part of Crete where the new city is to be founded, and bases his legislation on what he learns about it. We do the same thing now, so far as we can, and it is important to observe that the Roman lawyers did not follow up the lead which Plato had given them. In this, as in some other matters, Plato was about two thousand years ahead of his own time.

But it must not be supposed that he stopped there. He goes on to legislate in great detail for the city whose natural characteristics he has sketched out. And it is to be noted specially that his legislation goes into great detail just as the Roman law does. His reason for that is that we do not really know what is important and what is not. It may be, as he says, that, in the eyes of God, none of these things is really very important, but it is equally true that none of them can be considered unimportant.[13] It is therefore only to be expected that his legislation should go into great detail, and it is astonishing enough, if we remember, as we always should, that we are dealing with the work of a man over seventy years old who had not been busy with such things all his life, but had, on the contrary, given up all interest in the politics of his native land before the age of thirty.

It is only natural that the bulk of the laws which Plato lays down should be Athenian, and it is equally natural that at times he should definitely reject the

[13] *Legg.*

Athenian laws, where they have merely a local interest, and search for something more satisfactory. There is still a great deal to be done in this field. I cannot, of course, go into the matter here, but I would point out that it is practically fresh ground, and that the work has almost all to be done. It is, I am sure, well worth doing.

But it is even more worth while to follow up the hint which I have quoted from Cujas and to connect what we call Roman law with the *Laws* of Plato. No doubt, as I have said, there are many things there that go far beyond anything that ever found its way into the edict of the *praetor peregrinus*, but it is, nevertheless, of the first importance to trace that back, so far as it is possible, through Hellenistic law, which is at last beginning to be known, to its original source in the *Laws* of Plato. But we must not judge that great work from the standpoint of the Roman jurisconsult. Plato, no doubt, would have been deeply interested in the elaboration of such part of his work as the Roman jurist admitted to his own; but he would have denied emphatically that any system of law which left religion and science out of account, as Roman law does, could be more than a maimed and incomplete torso.

It is evident, moreover, that besides religion and science there are other things that enter into the lawgiver's province as Plato understands it. In the first place, there is education, and here again Plato anticipates the most modern views. We have seen that, by founding the Academy, Plato laid the foundation of university education in later days, but it is less generally known that in the *Laws* he formulated for the first time the principles on which the school, and even the kindergarten, should be organized. So far as we know, Plato was never married, but he certainly took the keenest interest in every thing that had to do with the education of young children. All that is to be found in the *Laws*, and in the *Laws* alone, and it seems to me that the neglect of this great work is answerable for a great deal of the prevalent misunderstanding in such matters. At the outset a very profound insight is shown. We start from the fact that babies naturally scream and kick, and we see that the educator's first duty will be to regulate those activities so that they may develop naturally into singing and dancing, which are, therefore, the first stages in education. This is not intended as a joke; Plato is perfectly serious about it, and he develops the whole scheme of elementary education from that beginning. That is another side of the art of legislation which the Roman jurist neglects, but which Plato follows up quite in a modern spirit.

Now this is what makes the reading of the *Laws* so difficult for us and also so sad. On the one hand, we have the greatest man that ever lived dealing with all the details of social organization with a fulness and completeness which has never been approached since; on the other, we see that he has only returned to the subjects which he really cares for and believes in after a long interval during which he had held himself aloof from the ordinary interests of everyday life, including, of course, the legal relations of citizens with one another. But his power of exposition had in large measure failed him, with the result that his longest and most elaborate work is hardly read by anyone now, though it is really the key to most things that have happened since, and though we may still find in it many warnings which might have saved us from some of the errors into which we tend to fall, especially in these latter days. When we speak of Plato's theory of education, we seem generally to mean the theory which he put into the mouth of Socrates in the *Republic*, but that is really quite misleading. If we wish to know what Plato himself thought on the most important subject of all, it is to the *Laws* we must turn, and it is to be hoped that they will be made accessible some day in such a form that they may be read with intelligence by every teacher. It would not be a bad thing either if certain portions of them were made accessible to all lawyers and politicians, who would certainly find much there that it deeply concerns them to know. But, even so, if the work is taken to bits, its total effect will be lost. The attempt to reproduce the *Laws* as a whole in modern times would call for a combination of gifts which has never been common, and which seems to become rarer every day.

CHAPTER VII

MATHEMATICS

There can be no doubt that the chief study of the Academy was mathematics, and it is really hopeless for anyone but a mathematician to understand fully the work that Plato was doing with his disciples. Unfortunately, I am not a mathematician, so that what I say must be provisional and open to criticism. Nevertheless, there are certain conclusions to which I have come, and I think it necessary to state what they are. If they are wrong, they can be corrected by those whose training has been better than mine, and I venture to think that my comparative ignorance may even prove useful in so far as it has led me to fix my eyes in the first place on certain quite elementary points which the trained mathematician is in danger of overlooking. In particular, I feel that it is difficult for anyone who is intimately familiar with the subject to realize that it came into existence with the Greeks for the first time, and that it developed among them with startling rapidity.

To begin with, there is not the slightest evidence that anything which really deserves the name of mathematics existed before the Greeks. This seems to be sufficiently attested by the fact that every mathematical term is Greek in its origin,[1] and generally suggests some sort of slang. Even the name *pyramid*, which has often been said to be of Egyptian origin, is a Greek word and means a wheaten cake.[2] I do not believe that, if the Greeks had borrowed their mathematics from Egypt, this would have been possible. As a matter of fact, the Greek language is full of borrowed words, and if they had got their mathematics from Egypt, we should have found this there too.

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[1] Of course a considerable number of terms still in use are of Latin origin, but these are all translations from the Greek. It is interesting to note the limited range of these terms. For instance, "circle" is Latin, but "ellipse" is Greek, "triangle" is Latin, but "pentagon" is Greek.

It is true, no doubt, that works which may be called mathematical have been discovered among Egyptian papyri, but they are of a very elementary character, and contain the most astonishing errors. For instance, the Rhind papyrus in the British Museum gives a number of rules for reducing triangles to rectangles, but these are only correct in cases where the triangles are right-angled, though the triangles given in the diagrams are apparently equilateral, and therefore not right-angled. The arithmetical problems are rather better, but they deal chiefly with the number of loaves or jars of beer that certain measures will yield, and the wages due to the workman for certain pieces of work. Plato knew all about that, for he tells us in the *Laws*[3] that in Egypt the children learn along with their letters to solve problems in the distribution of apples and wreaths to a greater or smaller number of people, the pairing of boxers and wrestlers, and so forth. Now the Greeks did not dignify such things with the name of *arithmetic*; they felt the need of a different name to distinguish them, and they called them

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[2] Note that πυραμίς is obviously the same word as πυραμοῦς and that the words are to be explained by the analogy of σησαμίς, σησαμοῦς.

[3] *Legg.* 819b.

logistic (cf. the French term *calcul*). The most remarkable passage in Plato on the subject, however, is in the *Republic*,[4] where he says that the Thracians and Scythians are marked by spirit (*θυμός*), the Greeks by the love of knowledge, and the Egyptians by love of money. It is plain from this that he knew nothing of an Egyptian origin of mathematics.

So far as we can now make out, the beginnings of real mathematics must be credited to the Pythagoreans, and there is little doubt that it arose in close connection with music. It seems certain at any rate that it was Pythagoras who discovered the ratios which determine the concordant notes of the scale. Of course we must remember that the Greeks did not mean what we mean by "harmony." That did not exist. To a Greek, harmony (*ἁρμονία*) meant simply the relations between the four fixed notes in the octave scale. I do not propose to go further into these matters now, nor yet into the parallel application of this theory to medicine. I would start simply from this, that Socrates had learnt a good deal from the exiled Pythagoreans and that Plato had learnt still more from Archytas at Tarentum.[6] Now we know that one of Plato's best pupils was Theaetetus of Athens, and we know further that Plato has left us a picture of the improvements he had made in Pythagorean mathematics in his early youth. That is clearly the point for us to start at if we wish to understand the mathematics of the Academy.

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[4] *Rep.* 435e.

[5] It is significant that Plato mentions Pythagoras only once (*Rep.* X 600a) and Pythagoreans only twice.

[6] See p. 76.

Theaetetus was an Athenian like Socrates and Plato, and there are good reasons for adding his name to the very scanty list of Athenian philosophers. There is no doubt that Plato himself would have desired to see Theaetetus included in the list; for, as we shall see, mathematics was still regarded in his time as a part, and almost the most important part, of philosophy. It was only at a later date that it became a separate science. We gather that Theaetetus was one of the original members of the Academy, and he died of wounds and dysentery after a battle fought at Corinth in 369 B.C., some twenty years after the foundation of the Academy.[7] The dialogue itself, however, takes us further back than that, since Socrates is the chief speaker, though we are told that his trial is imminent. We can say, therefore, that the imaginary date of the dialogue is 400 B.C., some thirty years before the death of Theaetetus. That being so, we may take it as evidence of the state of mathematics at that time. For our present purpose this will be sufficient. We need not trouble about the precise date in the fifth century at which particular discoveries were made. We know that they arose in the Pythagorean society, which had as its motto "The things of friends are common." For our present purpose we may leave it at that, though I believe we are more likely to be right if we attribute any given discovery to Pythagoras himself than if we ascribe it to anonymous disciples.

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[7] For the date of the dialogue see Eva Sachs, *De Theaeteto Atheniensi* (Berlin, 1914). It need hardly be said that the fixing of this date is of the utmost importance, and it will be observed that it fits in with the other indications which we have. It is quite inconsistent with Zeller's account of the matter.

We find, then, that in 400 B.C., the young Theaetetus is represented by Plato as having worked out a theory of quadratic surds. This involves the great discovery that what corresponds in arithmetic to the point in geometry is not 1 but 0, and that it is therefore possible to call such quantities as $\sqrt{3}$ and $\sqrt{5}$ numbers. It was really the assumption that the point corresponded to the unit which had led to all the trouble. No doubt it was a natural error, but it had given rise to all the difficulties in the Pythagorean system, and notably to the scandal of the incommensurability of the side and the diagonal of the square, or, in other words, that the square root of 2 is a "surd."[8]

Now it is to be noted that all this is clearly stated at the beginning of the *Theaetetus* and that the trouble about "irrationals" is really got over there. It is also to be noted that Aristotle never understood the simple point that the numerical series begins with 0 and not with 1. There is no doubt that Aristotle's obstinacy on this matter kept back the full understanding of it among philosophers for a very long time. Fortunately, however, it was not long before mathematics attained the position of being a separate subject and went its own way. That happened at Alexandria in the next century and it was, in some respects, lucky. It is, however, of fundamental historical importance that Plato wrote the introduction to the *Theaetetus* and gave the credit of overcoming this particular trouble to its real author. It is also of great importance to note that, within a century after the invention of mathematics by Pythagoras, it was possible for a young Athenian to discover the way to solve such difficulties, and that without the help of algebra, which makes such things easy for us at the present day. It gives us a high idea of the state of mathematical science about 400 B.C. that difficulties of that kind should be overcome without any such help.

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[8] It was, of course, impossible to go fully into this question in a public lecture. I would refer the reader to the article *Continuity* by Professor A. E. Taylor, in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, for a fuller account of the matter.

But that is not all. It is also to Theaetetus that we owe the existence of "solid geometry" or, as Plato once calls it, "stereometry."[9] The first hint we get of this is in the *Republic*,[10] in the passage where Socrates is enumerating the five sciences. He is about to pass from plane geometry to astronomy, when he recollects himself and points out that there is a science intermediate between these which deals with the "third increase," that is, with the cube, and generally with what has three dimensions, depth as well as length and breadth. "But," says Glaucon, "that does not appear to have been invented yet." Socrates answers that this is because, in the first place, no state holds such studies in respect and, secondly, because a director is necessary to guide them. If the state were to second the efforts of such a director, they would soon be perfected. Even as it is, their extreme elegance causes them to make some progress.

Now I venture to think that this passage is very significant in view of the early date at which the conversation recorded in the *Republic* is supposed to take place. At that time there certainly did not exist such a science as stereometry or solid geometry. But, in this passage, Plato is concerned to plan out the sciences which he was to teach in the Academy, and it was impossible to leave this one out. That is the only way in which I can explain the extreme awkwardness of the manner in which it is brought in, and I would call attention to it particularly. If Plato had long been in the habit of attributing to Socrates without hesitation or explanation such things as the "theory of ideas" why should he be so much troubled by making him prophesy, as it were, the birth of solid geometry? At any rate, it is the fact that the theory of the five regular solids was completed for the first time by Theaetetus. We are told in the scholia to Euclid that in Book XIII we have what are called the five figures of Plato, which are not his; but three of them, the cube, the pyramid, and the dodecahedron belong to the Pythagoreans, while the octahedron and the icosahedron belong to Theaetetus.[11] In other words, the theory of the regular solids was completed by Theaetetus, at a time when he was already a member of the Academy founded by Plato, and he also showed that there could only be those five.

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[9] *Epin.* 990d, 8.

[10] *Rep.* 528d *seq.*

From what has been said it will be obvious that Theaetetus of Athens was the real founder of mathematics as we understand the word. There is one point on which we should be glad to have further information, and that is the discovery of what are called the Conic Sections. It cannot be said that this is a matter that has been thoroughly cleared up, but it is at least certain that the terms "parabola," "ellipse," and "hyperbola" are of Pythagorean origin, though they did not mean exactly what they meant later. As the name Conic Sections implies, they came to be used of the curves which can be produced by dividing a cone in different ways, and it might seem that nothing of great importance was to be discovered in that way. However, the whole theory was worked out in detail by the end of the century, although it had to wait for over fifteen hundred years before its application was discovered. It had, in fact, been assumed by all Greek astronomers that the planets moved in circular orbits. It is, therefore, a striking fact that they had worked out the theory of the ellipse fully long before it was even suspected that the orbits of the planets were elliptical. When that was at last realized, it was found that there was already in existence a theory which gave a full account of such orbits. The nature of gravitation is a mystery to the present day, but it is nevertheless true that the ancient Greeks had worked out completely a system which at any rate enables us to describe its operation.

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[11] *Schol. Eucl.* p. 655. Heiberg. 'Εν τούτῳ τῷ βιβλίῳ, τουτέστι τῷ ιγ', γράφεται τά λεγόμενα Πλάτωνος ε̄ σχήματα, ἃ αὐτοῦ μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν, τρία δὲ τῶν προειρημένων ε̄ σχημάτων τῶν Πυθαγυρείων ἐστίν, ὅ τε κύβος καὶ ἡ πυραμίς, καὶ τὸ δωδεκάεδρον, Θεαιτήτου δὲ τό τε ὀκτάεδρον καὶ τὸ εἰκοσάεδρον. This is the point to which the *Elements* of Euclid leads up.

That such questions as this occupied the Academy is certain, though it is plain also that Plato did not consider their solution as sufficiently ripe to find a place in any of his published works. Again it is certain that Aristotle receded from the Platonic theory in this as in other matters. He found it impossible, indeed, to go back to the original Ionic view that the earth is flat, but in all other respects his cosmology was hopelessly reactionary and had the effect of retarding discovery in these fields for cen-

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[11] *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 104, *n.* 3.

turies. It will be well, then, for us to note particularly the points in which this regress is most marked.

In the first place, the later Pythagoreans had discovered that it is impossible to regard the earth as occupying the central place in our universe, though it had not, apparently, occurred to them that that place rightfully belonged to the sun. They held that our earth revolved round a central fire which is invisible to us. This again was because it had not occurred to them that the earth rotates on its axis, which was a very intelligible oversight, seeing that the only heavenly body which we can observe without a telescope is the moon, and the moon always keeps the same face turned to the earth or, in other words, its rotation round the earth takes the same time as its revolution round its axis. It was not till the telescope was invented that it was possible to see that this did not apply to all the planets, and it was natural at first to suppose that they all, like the moon, moved in circular orbits which kept them in the same position relatively to the earth. In dealing with Greek astronomy, it is necessary to bear constantly in mind that the invention of the telescope has totally revolutionized our view of the heavenly bodies. But at any rate, it is remarkable that the later Pythagoreans, even without such aid, had come to regard the earth as a body rotating round a central fire. Such a view seemed, of course, to an eastern Ionian like Aristotle, quite arbitrary, and he preferred to put the earth once more in the center, though he had learnt from Plato's *Phaedo* that it was spherical in shape.

The next point we have to notice is that Greek scientific men generally had neglected the planets. The only two that are even mentioned in Greek literature are Hesperos and Heosphoros, and we are told that Parmenides (or Pythagoras) was the first to identify these as a single planet. Mercury is mentioned for the first time in Plato's *Timaeus*,[13] and the other divine names do not appear in any work before the *Epinomis*,[14] where they are said to be "Syrian." That is a very remarkable fact, and must be connected with the total absence of astrology from classical Greek literature. The Babylonians, of course, believed in astrology, and had therefore given names to the planets; but the Greeks ignored them completely till Plato's time, when we find the first beginnings of an attempt to explain their motions.

And we can still see that before this time the Greeks were quite justified in ignoring the planets to which the Babylonians paid so much attention. It was just because their apparent motions are so irregular that they hardly seemed any more parts of a system than shooting stars and the like. The Greeks called them "planets," a name which means something like "tramp-stars," and we need feel no surprise when we learn that it became one of the chief tasks of the Academy to exhibit the regularity of their motions. We even know something of how this was done, and it will be as well to look at the evidence.

In the sixth century A.D., Simplicius, who had the library of the Academy at his disposal, tells us that Plato, who held that the movement of the heavenly bodies must be regular, propounded it as a problem to find on what hypothesis the apparent irregularity of the planetary movements could be explained so as to "save appearances." That is a phrase which is still in use, though I fancy few people know what it really means. It is simply this. The appearances of the planetary motions are, as we have seen, hopelessly irregular. Sometimes a planet advances steadily in one direction, then it seems to stop altogether, and at another time it appears to advance in the opposite direction. That, Plato felt, cannot be right, and we shall never understand the motions of the planets until we have found some explanation of those anomalies, or, in other words, till we have discovered some account of these motions which will explain these apparent irregularities. The explanation is, of course, in the first place, that the orbits of the planets do not go round the earth, and, in the second place, that they do go round the sun. It can, I think, be proved that Plato had got as far as that, and that he had discovered the heliocentric system ages before that discovery is usually dated. It is quite natural, of course, that we should know of this doctrine chiefly from those who could not accept it.

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[13] *Tim.* 38e. [14] *Epin.* 987b.

We know, for instance, that Eudoxus invented an extremely complicated hypothesis which was to account for all these anomalies in the planetary motions on the assumption of the earth's central position, and we also know that Plato would not accept this as a satisfactory solution. To work out his theory, Eudoxus had to assume no less than twenty-seven concentric spheres rotating round the earth. What is more, it was soon found that this was too low an estimate of their number. Callippus added to it, and Aristotle had to add still more. Further, Aristotle transformed the geometrical hypothesis of Eudoxus into a mechanical system of material spheres in contact with one another. A more satisfactory development of this theory was worked out later at Alexandria. The concentric spheres of Eudoxus were replaced by eccentric spheres and epicycles, and what we still call the Ptolemaic system was the result. That held its place till the Renaissance.

But, though that system prevailed, we know that Plato would have nothing to do with such speculations. He could not believe the truth to be so complicated, and there cannot, in fact, be the slightest doubt that, towards the end of his life, he had come to the conclusion that the only satisfactory explanation which could be given of the apparent irregularity of the planetary motions was to be found in the view that the earth and all the planets revolved round the sun. This was not so revolutionary a view as might appear; for, as we have seen, there is no doubt that the later Pythagoreans had held the doctrine that the earth was not in the center, but revolved round the central fire, which was invisible owing to its position. All that was wanted now was to substitute the sun for the central fire. That was the step which I have no doubt that Plato took in his old age.

The evidence for this is so strong that it is hard to see how it can ever have been doubted. It is that of Theophrastus, who may have been a member of the Academy before Plato's death, though he afterwards became a disciple of Aristotle's and supplemented his work on animals by a work on plants which still exists. He is reported, on quite good authority, that of Plutarch, to have spoken on the matter as follows:

> Theophrastus tells in addition that Plato, when he grew older, repented of having given the earth the central place in the universe.[15]

That cannot, of course, be an invention of Theophrastus himself, who was a disciple of Aristotle, and no doubt accepted his doctrine of the central position of the earth. He was, however, a very good authority on historical points like this, and his adherence to Aristotle would not be likely to lead him to invent such a story. Of course there is no certain indication of such a view in Plato's published works, and in the *Phaedo*, which was written when he was comparatively young, we certainly have the old geocentric view. Aristotle, too, seems to know something of some such turn in Plato's opinions, though he does not explain it clearly. To him, no doubt, the cosmology of the *Phaedo* which, as we have seen, was one of his favorite books, seemed quite sufficient, and he went back to that. The result was, of course, unfortunate in the highest degree, and became even more so when the works of Aristotle which deal with such subjects became known once more in western Europe in the thirteenth century, and were taken by St. Thomas Aquinas as a guide to all knowledge outside the Scriptures. It was only for a short time, however, that they really maintained that position, and the most interesting thing about the Renaissance is the way in which its great men turned back from Aristotle to Plato in these matters and thus founded modern science. It is a fact that Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo all regarded themselves as carrying on the work of Pythagoras and Plato which had been interrupted by Aristotle, and it is also a fact that, since their time, astronomy has steadily advanced on the lines that Plato had been the first to lay down for it. It is worth while to ask ourselves why it suffered so long a stationary period.

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[15] Plut. *Quaest. Plat.* 1006 c. *Θεόφραστος δὲ καὶ προσιστορεῖ τῷ Πλάτωνι πρεσβυτέρῳ γενομένῳ μεταμέλειν ὡς οὐ προσήκουσαν ἀποδόντι τῇ γῇ τὴν μέσην χώραν τοῦ παντός.*

In the main, we must admit, it was due to what we call specialization, and we have clearly a lesson to learn from this. It seems that, after Plato, in his extreme old age, had discovered the simple hypothesis which accounts for the apparently anomalous motions of the planets, the study of such matters by philosophers came to an end. Aristotle had thrown himself heart and soul into the study of what we call biology, and had adopted an extremely complicated astronomical system which, even in his own time, was hopelessly out of date. The study of mathematics and astronomy was transferred to Alexandria, where it flourished for a time and produced remarkable results. But it had become, in the main, what we call a specialism, and it had lost touch with the larger questions with which it had been intimately associated in the Academy. Even the *Elements* of Euclid, admirable as they are, show some trace of that, though they still preserve the main outlines of the Platonic study of geometry. That is a matter into which I can hardly go here, though it is one which will well repay study.[16]

One thing, however, we must note. Though it is clear that the body of the work comes straight from the school of Plato, there are certainly traces of the unfortunate results of the specialization of mathematical and astronomical study. In the first place, this had the effect of removing these studies from the ordinary curriculum of the Academy itself, though it is highly desirable that we should not exaggerate that. The works of Plutarch, for instance, furnish sufficient evidence that the mathematical studies of the Academy were still capable of influencing men in his time and, though we may differ in certain important points from his interpretation of the *Timaeus*, it at least enables us to see quite clearly that it was still studied by those who wished to understand our universe. And it must always be remembered that Aristarchus worked out the heliocentric theory long before Copernicus.

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[16] It is very important to remember that Euclid, though he was an Alexandrian, wrote not long after Plato's death.

Now in all this, I fear that some may think I have been unfair to Aristotle, but that is not really so, and I wish to make the matter quite plain. Aristotle was undoubtedly the first great name in zoology, though nothing was known of his work after the time of Theophrastus, who took up the task of completing it by giving an outline of botany, which still exists.[17] On his death the manuscripts of Aristotle's lectures were hidden away in the cellar at Scepsis, where they remained unknown for over two hundred years. Aristotle was regarded simply as a disciple of Plato, and the school he had founded at Athens ceased to be of any importance. The only school of philosophers that was of any account was the Stoic school, and the Stoics were certainly quite unimportant in matters scientific. It is only in the fifth century A.D.

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[17] It may be noted that the treatise of Theophrastus on Botany is now accessible in the Loeb series.

that the study of Aristotle was revived, and that was due to the members of the Platonic Academy and not to those of the school which he himself had founded. By this time the "Neoplatonists," as they are called now-a-days, had once more made Athens their headquarters and Proclus, who called himself *Diadochus*, that is, the successor of Plato, had given for a time a fresh start to Platonism. But, speaking generally, the real doctrine of Plato was not, for reasons I have given, to be found in his works, and it was therefore quite natural that the Platonists of those days, and notably Simplicius, should busy themselves mainly with commentaries on Aristotle, whom they regarded simply as a subordinate member of Plato's school. It is, I think, of the first importance to realize that Plato's reluctance to express his real beliefs on certain subjects in writing, coupled with the fact that Aristotle had no such reluctance, accounts for the curious amalgam of the two doctrines which we call "Neoplatonism." It was, in effect, Platonism, but it had to turn to Aristotle for an answer to those questions which Plato had not felt ready to treat in his published works.

It was not till the thirteenth century that Aristotle can be said to have become known in Western Europe, if we except his treatises on Logic, which gave rise to the dispute between Realists and Nominalists. At last, however, the complete Aristotle became known, and was at first prohibited by ecclesiastical authority. It was only after the work of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas that he became the recognized philosopher of the Church, and that was only managed by recognizing that a sharp separation must be made between what was regarded as revealed truth and what was not. But Aristotle himself would certainly not have admitted any such separation, and he is in no way responsible for the form of Aristotelianism that has been revived in our own day under the authority of Pope Leo XIII, at the head of which stood the late Cardinal Mercier, who showed at least that, whatever objection may be raised, and legitimately raised, to this interpretation of Aristotle, it was compatible with a noble Christian courage.

It has to be specially noted, however, that the work of Thomas Aquinas was never fully recognized in England, and that what we must call the Platonist tradition continued to hold its place. Oxford refused to follow the lead of Paris in this matter, and it was mainly due to its adherence to the older and more Platonic view that the study of mathematics did not die out there as it did on the continent. As was inevitable in those days, it was largely a struggle between rival religious orders, but it should never be forgotten that the preservation of the science of mathematics at a time when the Aristotelian doctrine of Thomas had taken possession of Paris was due mainly to two men, Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon. We are only beginning to understand these great men now and to appreciate the part that England played in the matter. It is quite in order that another English mathematician, though this time a Cambridge man, Dr. Whitehead, should start his work on the philosophy of nature with the views expounded in the *Timaeus* of Plato.

CHAPTER VIII

THEOLOGY

In these lectures I have tried to show that the doctrine of Plato, if we mean by that, as we should mean, the doctrine taught by Plato in the Academy, is not to be found in his best known dialogues. These are simply sketches, which possess perennial charm, of the sort of conversation Socrates was accustomed to hold with his young disciples and his more elderly contemporaries. We have seen, however, that, in parts of those dialogues which belong to the middle period of his life, we do find traces of teaching which go beyond anything we can reasonably ascribe to Socrates himself, though it is not, as a rule, fully developed even there. I have already had occasion to call attention to the curious way in which the doctrine of solid geometry is introduced in the *Republic*,[1] and I have pointed out that the awkwardness with which this is done is an additional proof that the book is, on the whole, Socratic rather than Platonic. We have now to consider another striking instance of the same thing. In the *Phaedo* we have, as I believe, a careful and accurate account of the beliefs of Socrates regarding the human soul, but there is not the slightest trace in it of what, we shall see, was the Platonic doctrine on the subject. Plato's doctrine makes its first appearance in the *Phaedrus*, where, however, it is quite briefly stated, and it is only when we come to the *Laws* that we find it fully elaborated, and that without any reference to the theory of "forms," which must have played a very great part in the teaching of Socrates on the subject. All this is just what we should expect if the general view on which these lectures proceed is sound. We are entitled to require of any theory on the subject that it should take account of the fact that there is not in the *Phaedo* the most distant allusion to the doctrine of the soul we are about to consider, any more than there is in the *Laws* the slightest hint of the theory of forms, on which the discussion in the *Phaedo* mainly turns. That is the first and most important thing we have to notice. In the *Laws*, where Plato is speaking for himself, he has not a word to say of the "forms," which play the chief part in the *Phaedo*. On the contrary, it is evident that what he says of the soul in the later work has nothing whatever to do with what he says of the "forms" in the earlier.

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[1] See above, p. 102.

Here, then, we find a certain contradiction in Plato's philosophy as we have it, or at any rate a contradiction between the earlier dialogues, which I have tried to show are fundamentally Socratic, and the later, which certainly give us the developed thought of Plato himself. I have pointed out already that, in Plato's later writings, there is nothing at all about the theory of "forms" except a solitary sentence in the *Timaeus*,[2] where it is mentioned, not by Socrates but by a Pythagorean, who is represented

[2] See above, p. 45.

as not having been present at the discussion of the subject in the *Republic*. In fact he seems to be introduced solely for the purpose of allowing Plato to ignore what he had written about it in the earlier dialogue. What we do find in Plato's later works, and especially in the *Laws*, is a careful discussion of two things which hardly play any part in his earlier writings, or at least only in a mythical form, namely, God and the Soul. These are now discussed in quite a different style from anything we have met with hitherto. They are treated quite simply, and without any touch of the mythical imagery which we find so regularly in the Socratic dialogues. That means, of course, that they are now regarded as objects of science, and no longer as things which can only be treated in a mythological manner.

Of course we are faced by the difficulty of Plato's later style, of which I have said enough already, and, chiefly for that reason, there are obscurities in plenty still. Nevertheless, I venture to think that the main outlines of the doctrine Plato is striving to convey are distinct enough, and I do not doubt that continued study of the *Laws* will make clear much that is still obscure. It is the fact that this great work has never yet been read as carefully as it should be. We have seen that in his youth Zeller rejected it altogether, in spite of the fact that Aristotle certainly knew it, and that, though he afterwards came to accept it, it is nevertheless treated in his history only as a sort of appendix.[1] It is also the fact that many passages which seem obscure to us now were apparently quite clear to students, whether Christian or

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[1] See above, p. 85.

Pagan, in the first five centuries after Christ. However, in spite of the fact that much still remains doubtful, I believe that the main lines of Plato's teaching on those subjects are quite easily to be made out and are of fundamental importance.

I shall begin by trying to explain what Plato has to say about God in the *Laws*. In the first place, he lays down that there are three forms of belief on this subject, which are, in various degrees, hurtful. There is (1) the doctrine that there is no god, (2) the doctrine that, though there may be gods, yet they do not concern themselves with human affairs, and (3) the doctrine that, though there may be gods who concern themselves with human affairs, yet it is possible to escape their judgment by buying their favor with costly offerings.[4] Of these beliefs the first, simple atheism, is distinctly the least deadly; the second is worse, since, while admitting the existence of gods, it charges them with ignorance or indifference, or both; the third is the worst of all, since, while admitting the existence of gods, it imputes to them downright moral corruptibility. It will be observed, with regard to this classification, that it is based entirely on moral grounds, and that simple atheism is therefore considered less dangerous than the view afterwards maintained by Epicurus, and that again as less dangerous than the ordinary forms of popular religion.

The refutation of atheism is this.[5] There is motion everywhere in the world and there always will be. But all motion is either communicated from without or originated from within. No series of motions can be started except by something which moves spontaneously. Now any motion which moves itself must be prior to a motion which can move other things but cannot move itself. Thus the very existence of nature necessarily presupposes the existence of one or more such sources of movement. Now that which moves itself must be immortal and imperishable since it does not depend for its activity on any source external to itself, but has the conditions of its persistence wholly within itself. And that which can move itself is what we call a "soul," and the definition of a soul is that it is *a movement that can move itself.*

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[4] *Legg.* 892c–894e.

[5] *Legg.* 893b–896d.

The motions of the soul[1] are causally prior to all bodily motions, and they are such things as thoughts, memories, wishes, hopes, and fears. All the motions of which physical science takes account, motions such as translation, rotation, contraction, expansion, and the rest depend upon motions of the soul, and the great mistake made by philosophers in the past was to regard such physical motions as requiring no further explanation. In this respect they prepared the way for the illusion which holds that there is no purpose or intelligence behind nature. Now souls are either good or bad, and a good soul, just in proportion as it is good, will initiate orderly and regular movements, while a bad soul will initiate irregular and disorderly movements. But the chief movements in nature, those of the heavenly bodies, are quite regular and orderly, from which it follows that the highest soul of all must be a perfectly good soul. But, since there are disorderly movements in nature, this cannot be the only soul; there must be at least more than one soul to account for this disturbance of order, but the disorderly soul or souls are manifestly inferior and subordinate.

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[1] *Legg.*

Such is Plato's argument for the existence of God. It is not, be it observed, an argument for monotheism, though it cannot be doubted that Plato personally believed in one God. Indeed, that was the belief of all intelligent Athenians at this date. We are apt to think of the ancient Greeks as polytheists, and no doubt we are right in the main. Greek literature, at least, is certainly polytheistic.[7] But here we must note carefully that this is due mainly to the influence of Homer, and that to Homer the whole machinery of Olympus is more or less unreal. It is certain, at any rate, that the gods in Homer are far less dignified than the men. We need only look at the first book of the *Iliad* to convince ourselves of this. It begins with a very human quarrel indeed, but undoubtedly the bickering of the immortals at the end of the book is much less dignified, and it is impossible for a moment to suppose that it represents any real religious belief. That, in fact, is Plato's chief objection to it and to mythology generally. But we must bear in mind that such things formed no part of Greek religion, which was a very different thing. It is certain that not only Plato but all intelligent Greeks regarded mythology as purely fanciful. The Greeks, we must always remember, had no sacred books, and therefore no one was expected to believe in certain stories simply because they were found there. It is at least certain that Plato treated all these tales from that point of view, and it is worth noting that we never hear of anyone being punished for disbelieving the stories of Homer, while we do hear of the divine wrath being inflicted on a poet who repeated them, and only removed on his recantation.[8]

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[7] Just so, it would be possible to argue that Milton's *Paradise* is polytheistic, though it is very certain that Milton was a monotheist.

With regard to the theology of the *Laws*, it is of the utmost importance to remember that God is described as a soul and not as a form, and that a soul is a motion that moves itself. That is the distinctly Platonic contribution to our understanding of the subject. As I have said, there is no trace of it at all in the *Phaedo*, and in the *Laws* there is no trace of the theory of "ideas." Further, in the *Laws* we find nothing of the mythical form into which Socrates is represented as passing at once, when he comes to ultimate questions such as this. In fact I have no doubt that the element of myth, which is so prominent in some of the Platonic dialogues, is Socratic rather than Platonic. It marks the point at which Socrates felt that he had come to something which could not be otherwise expressed, but he regularly says that it is a myth which is more or less like the truth, but for which he will not answer in detail. That is also why the so-called "doctrine of ideas" is never introduced by him in a mythical form, but always in a matter of fact way, just as the truths of geometry are. It also explains the fact, which I do not think can be otherwise explained at all, that this doctrine is at once accepted by his hearers when it is brought before them, while other doctrines which seem obvious enough to us provoke questions which are elaborately answered. That is the fact which the common view seems to me quite incapable of explaining, and which it therefore makes no attempt to explain.

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[8] *Phaedrus* 243 a, 5. τῶν γὰρ ὀμμάτων στερηθεὶς (Στησίχορος) διὰ τὴν Ἑλένης κακηγορίαν οὐκ ἠγνόησεν ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος, ἀλλ' ἅτε μουσικὸς ὢν ἔγνω τὴν αἰτίαν, καὶ ποιεῖ εὐθύς—

Οὐκ ἔστ' ἔτυμος λόγος οὗτος,
οὐδ' ἔβας ἐν νηυσὶν εὐσέλμοις,
οὐδ' ἵκεο Πέργαμα Τροίας·

καὶ ποιήσας δὴ πᾶσαν τὴν καλουμένην Παλινῳδίαν παραχῆμα ἀνέβλεψεν.

But, if that is so, we may perhaps find ourselves near the solution of the great difficulty which the most recent expositors of Plato have felt. Even Professor Taylor, with whom I am in substantial agreement, feels that there is a certain inconsistency between the doctrine of the forms and the doctrine of the soul, and certainly there is such a disagreement between them as they are found in the Platonic writings. But, as I have pointed out, the doctrine of forms finds no place at all in any work of Plato later than the *Parmenides*, if we except a single sentence which is put into the mouth of the Pythagorean Timaeus in the dialogue called by his name. I do not mean to say that Plato had renounced the doctrine. That he had not seems to be proved by the polemics of Aristotle, which do not suggest, however, that Aristotle really understood the doctrine he is criticizing. It may very well be that he did not, as he was not a mathematician but a biologist, and there has undoubtedly been a wall separating these two points of view down to the present day. What is certain is that Aristotle's criticism of the doctrine of forms cannot be said to refer to that doctrine as we find it in Plato's earlier works which are accessible to us now; it seems in the main to be aimed at a later form of the theory such as may have been taught in the Academy in the twenty years that Aristotle belonged to it, but which is not to be found in Plato's works as we have them. In any case, we must remember that Aristotle was entirely wanting in that historical sense which is so needful to those who undertake to criticize the thoughts of their predecessors, and that this deficiency on his part has seriously interfered with our understanding of the philosophies which had preceded his own. It could hardly be expected that a young Ionian from Macedonia could really understand the highly developed mathematical science which he found in the Academy, and it was only natural that he should not find himself completely until his attention was turned by Plato to the biological questions on which, from that time forward, his best work was to be done. It is certain, at least, that he never understood Plato's greatest work, the *Laws*, and it is significant that, in one place, he ascribes the doctrine of the *Laws* to Socrates and not to Plato.

That, moreover, is the explanation of the fact that, where Aristotle tries to develop the theories of God and the Soul which were the chief doctrines of Plato's later life, he in fact destroyed them altogether. No doubt he may seem to accept them verbally, and it is certain that he called his metaphysics by the name of "theology,"[9] and that he also follows Plato in basing it on the fact of motion. But at this point he introduces a new idea of his own. He holds that, in all cases of motion from within, we have to distinguish between something which "sets in motion" and something which "is set in motion." When we say that an animal moves itself, we really mean that its soul sets its body in motion or, in other words, the soul is mover and not moved, the body is moved and not mover. Taking this along with the reactionary astronomy which Aristotle had also adopted, it becomes necessary to make a distinction between the sphere, which is moved, and the separated or incorporeal intelligence which moves it. Every sphere will have such a "separated intelligence" as its "unmoved mover." At the head of all these will be the intelligence which causes the diurnal movement of the fixed stars, and that, according to Aristotle, is God. It is obvious that this is a violent reaction against the Platonic theory which I tried to explain in my last lecture. The mere fact that the diurnal revolution of the fixed stars once more becomes of the first importance in the Aristotelian system marks it definitely as a revival of more primitive ideas than we have found reason to attribute to Plato in his later years.

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[9] Of course the word "metaphysics" is quite unknown to Aristotle. It is a modern adaptation of the title τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά, which means only the treatises that "come after the Physics," and is due to Andronicus (first century B.C.), who did not know what else to call them.

But Aristotle goes still further in this reactionary path. Since God is intelligence and, what is more, a "separate" intelligence, he is not a moral being, and can have nothing to do with the regulation of appetite by intelligence or with any other specifically human activity. His intelligence must be entirely employed in "contemplation," and in contemplation of one object, namely, himself. The divine life is, in fact, a "thinking of thinking" and nothing else. And from this it follows that, though God is ultimately the source of all life and movement in the world, he is not aware of the existence of the world which, nevertheless, he moves. At this point Aristotle breaks into what seems almost the language of Plato, when he says that God moves the world as the beloved moves the lover. No explanation of this is given or even attempted, and it is very difficult to say what is really meant. There are one or two other outbursts of the same kind in Aristotle, and they were evidently important to him, but we have no means of settling their precise application. How such a God as Aristotle describes can be called "the beloved" it is impossible to say, and even more so to say in what sense the world can be said to be "the lover" of such a God. Perhaps the phrase is only a survival of some earlier and more Platonic exposition. We must always remember that Aristotle's works were never edited by himself for publication, and it is not easy to see how these words could have survived if they had been.

We really get a better idea of the direction Aristotle's thought was taking from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which we may now safely regard as one of his very latest works. One of the most important conclusions to which Jaeger has come is that the *Eudemian Ethics* is also Aristotle's, though it represents an earlier stage in his development. Now the most striking thing about the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as we have it, is the ardor and intensity with which the contemplative life is treated in the Tenth Book. In fact, the ultimate good for man is there said to be the "theoretic" or speculative life, and we can understand how it is that the life of practical wisdom (φρόνησις) is, as it were, degraded in an earlier part of the work in order to make way for the exaltation of theoretical wisdom (σοφία) at the conclusion. In Plato the two words are synonymous and we can see that the distinction made between them by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is deliberate.

It follows that, for Aristotle, the good for man is to be found in the theoretic life, and the practical life is at most its necessary foundation. In that respect Aristotle is wholly at variance with Plato. The highest life is now only the life to be lived by a few devotees of pure science, whereas to Plato, as we have seen, the duty of those who have reached the highest point of scientific knowledge is "to descend in turn into the cave," to see whether they can rescue any of those who are still confined in it.

Of course we must always remember that, while we have all Plato's published writings, and it is his unpublished lectures that are lost, the case is just the opposite with Aristotle. Here, since the discovery of the manuscripts of his lectures, the published works have all but disappeared. The comparison of the two men is, therefore, necessarily unfair. We must also bear in mind that Aristotle died when he was little over sixty and that Plato was busy with his work to the last, when he was about eighty. Yet we know that the *Laws* (and the *Epinomis*) were his latest works, and (if Jaeger is right) we know that the *Nicomachean Ethics* is Aristotle's latest work, and in particular that the glorification of the theoretic or contemplative life with which it ends is the latest part of it. So it is possible to make some sort of comparison between the systems of the two men. It was, however, a misfortune that, after Plato's death, there seemed to be less room for what may be called the more practical side of his teaching, to use the Aristotelian phrase. That, however, is really quite inadequate. We do not usually call self-sacrifice "practical," and yet that is what Plato really demands of those at the head of the state. However, let us call it "practical," since it is at least that. But, after his death, it soon appeared that a new world was coming into existence, in which the practical side was to be looked after first by the Macedonians, and then by the Romans. It is no use quarreling with that at this time of day, but it is only right that we should look back to Plato as the real originator of our modern civilization, even in those matters which seem to have come to us in the West from Rome and to eastern peoples from Macedon. That, of course, was in no way Plato's fault. He had felt bound, indeed, to renounce all interest in the politics of his native city after the death of Socrates; but, as we have seen, that did not mean for him that he had given up politics altogether—the *Laws* and the *Epistles* contain the proof of that—and it was not his fault that Dionysius proved hopeless. And it is fair to remember that it was largely because of his efforts to make something of the tyrant that his best work was done and that, at the end of his life, he devoted himself once more to what had been the ambition of his youth. Nor, as we have seen, was the work he did in this direction without fruit; for it laid the foundation on which what we call Roman law was to be built. Unhappily, Plato's immediate disciples were mostly Ionians, and the Ionians had always proved themselves incapable of sustained political effort, so it was only a foundation that he was able to lay. Nevertheless he did lay it, and it is on it that all our modern law really rests to the present day.

It was, I believe, a real misfortune that, in much later days, Aristotle usurped for a brief period the place that is really Plato's. I even venture to think that it is a pity that the attempt was made in the nineteenth century to restore the authority of Aristotle. For, in the first place, it was not, and could not be, the real Aristotle that became the chief authority of the Church. It is obvious that he had to be very carefully expurgated if he was to occupy that position. The Church could not agree to a doctrine which made God completely ignorant of human affairs, nor could it adopt the Aristotelian theory of the soul. I venture to think that this will be seen sooner or later by the Church itself, and that it will find itself more and more disposed to look a little farther back than its present official theology.

And now I have come to the end of what it seemed opportune and possible to say about Platonic philosophy at the present moment. That means that I have dwelt most on those aspects of it which are least known and most difficult to make out. I have tried, above all, to show what are the points in which Plato differs from Socrates, and also those in which his great Ionian disciple differs from him. I cannot tell how far I may have succeeded in making these points clear, but I am very sure that it is only by getting as distinct an idea as may be of the fundamental differences between the three great teachers of Greece that there is any real hope of understanding any of them.

There is little doubt that the present century is on the point of bringing men back to Plato in all essentials and this makes it important to discover, as far as we can, what Plato really thought about the things that matter most. I fear that I have only shown that it is impossible to do so fully, but it is at least worth trying. The danger at present is that Plato should be regarded as a sort of mixture of Socrates and Aristotle. If we would understand him, we must first clearly distinguish what is really Platonic from what belongs to his predecessor and what belongs to his successor.

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